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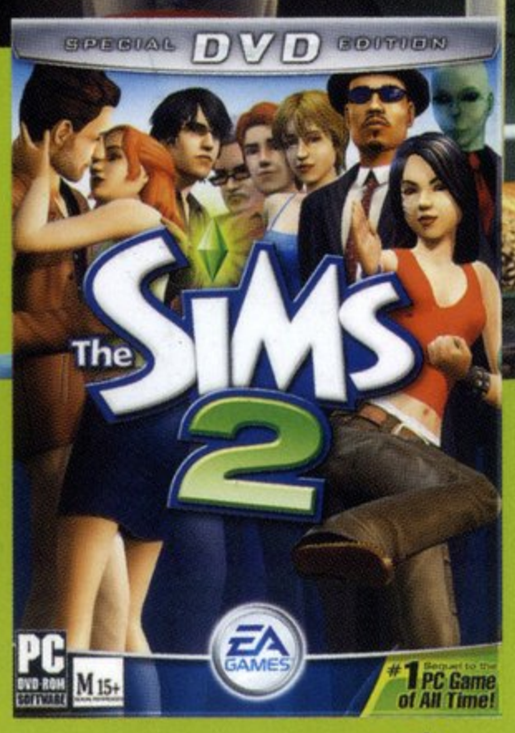

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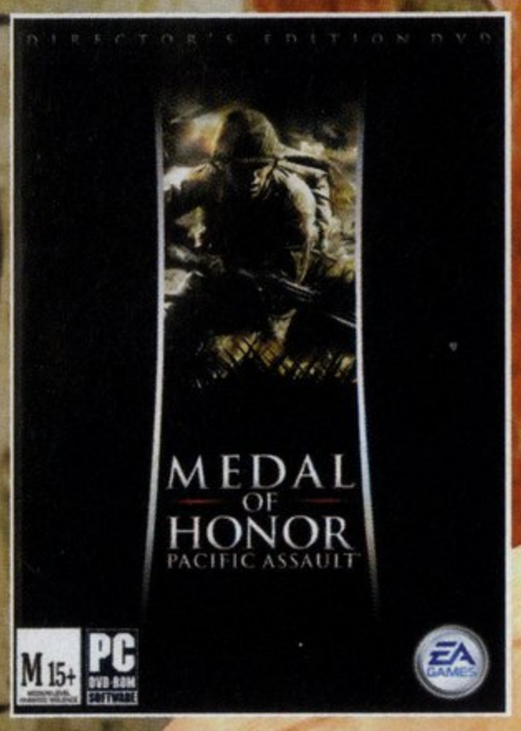

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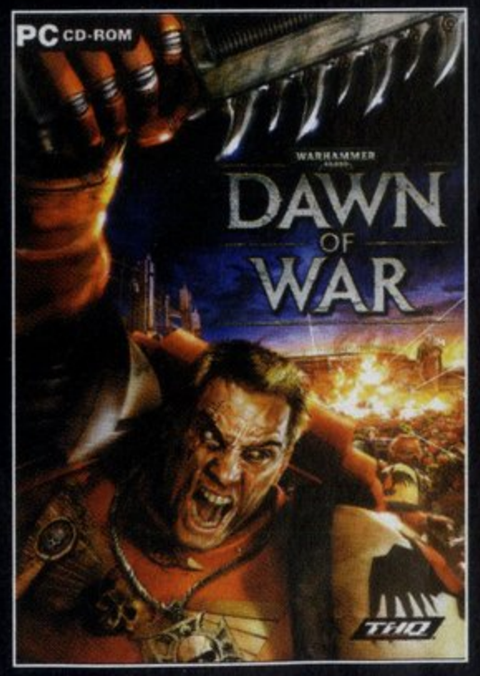

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DISTRIBUTION by ndd
Printed in Australia by Webstar

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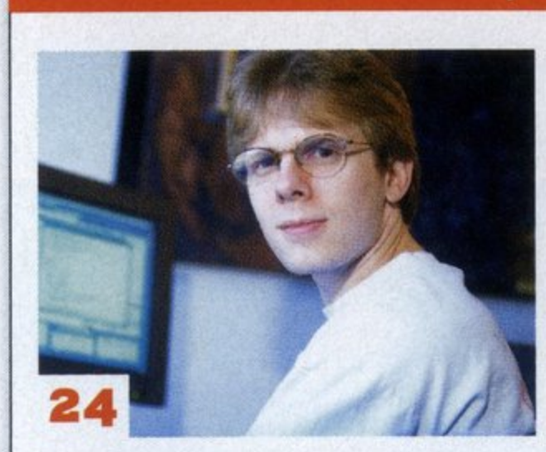
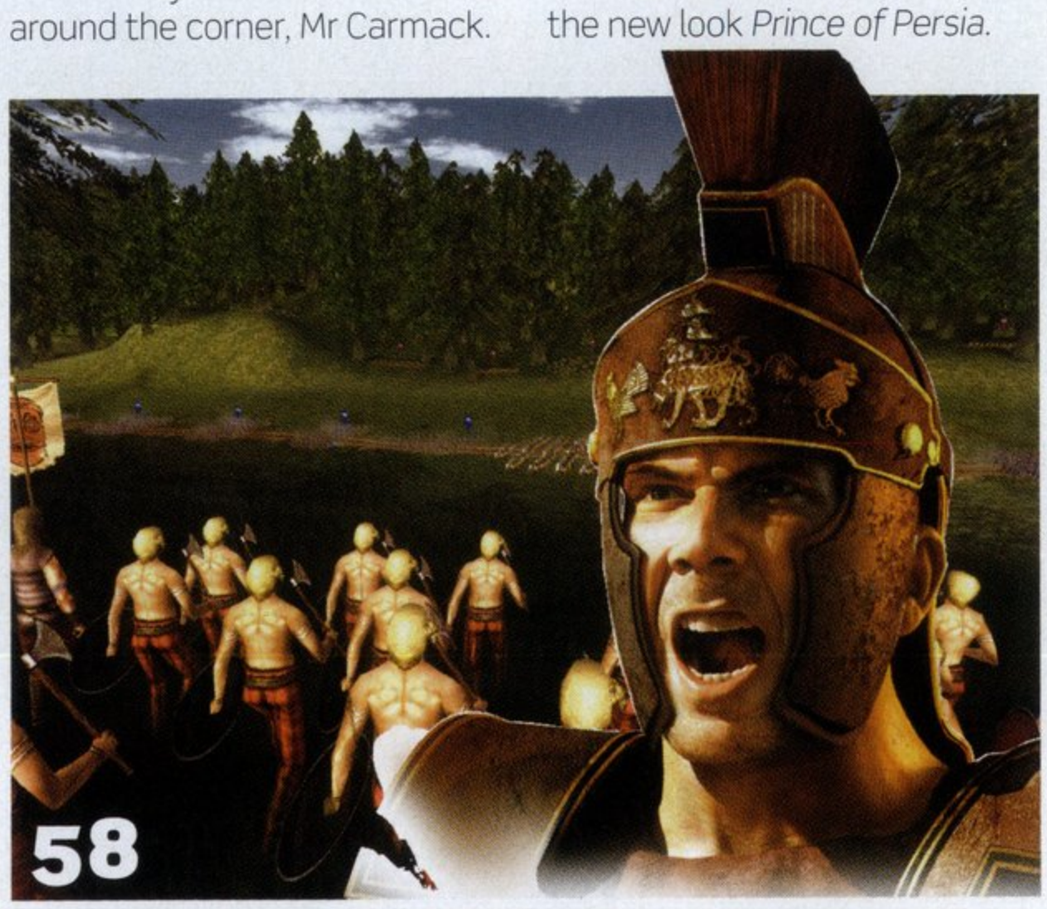
DERWENT HOWARD

This month, we've been...



LOOKING AHEAD...
...with the only man who seems to have any idea about what's around the corner, Mr Carmack.

MEETING ROYALTY...
...by travelling to Montreal, where Ubisoft introduced us to the new look *Prince of Persia*.



CONQUERING THE WORLD...
...in *Rome: Total War*. Creative Assembly have forged the best all-round war-sim ever, and we take you on a five-page journey through pick for 'Strategy game of 2004'. Hands down.

GOING FOR A RIDE...
...We keep joining the queue again & again, *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3* is simply too addictive.

MANNING THE DECKS...
...of a virtual niteclub. Can't cut it as a spinster? Maybe you can DJ to *Anarchy Online* players.

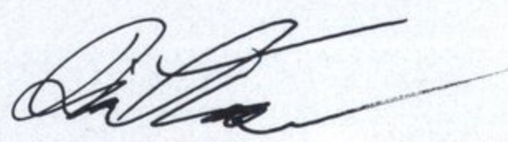
Ave! PC Gamers!

You know, to be honest, when a game gets hyped up for more than 12 months, I'm usually disappointed. Maybe that could be put down to me being one of those people that likes doing things rather than talking about it, or more likely, the fact so many games are pitched to we gamers with screenshots and video that simply make them look so much more spectacular and impressive than when we eventually fire them up on our PCs. Thank heavens for developers like Creative Assembly and Maxis, both of whom have backed the hype that preceded their games. Actually, curse you both... My social life was just taking off again.

We're also thankful for this time of year. In the last days before going to print *Call of Duty: United Offensive*, *Dawn of War* and *Evil Genius* all arrived on my desk. There's enough A-grade gaming on this patch of table to keep me busy for weeks, nay, months. Shame I've only got weeks to get them all done for you next issue.

But next month's issue should also include *Half-Life 2* unless every gaming media service has it wrong about the release date of Valve's long awaited follow-up to the adventures of Gordon Freeman. It's a hard act to follow, but with all the footage that's given everyone a healthy taste of what's in store, it's another game we suspect won't disappoint.

And that's just next month... When the games are this good, we don't mind working to exhaustion.



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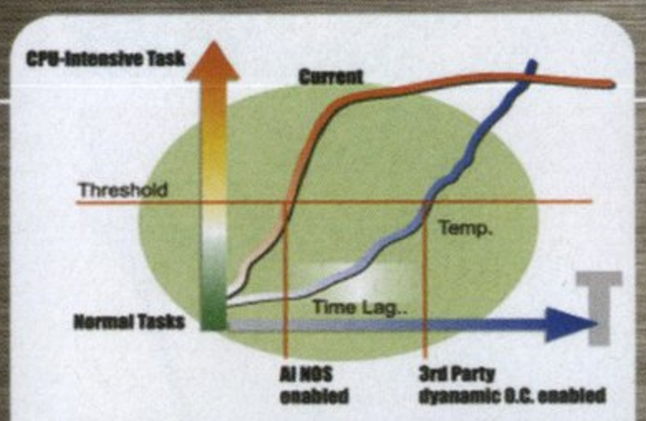

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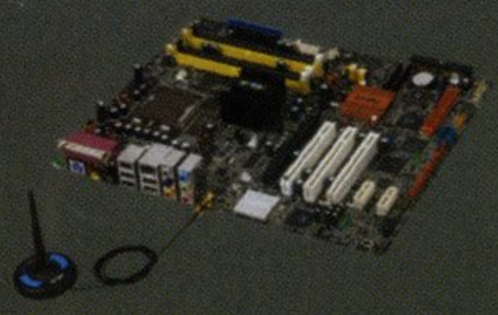

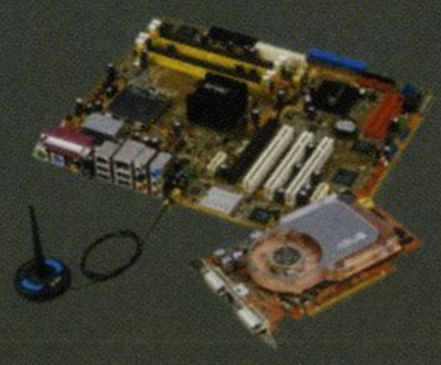

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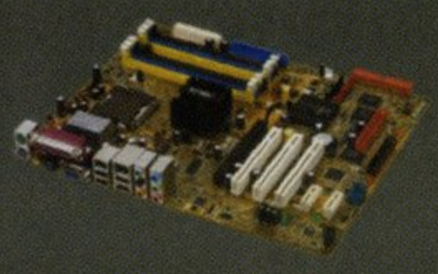

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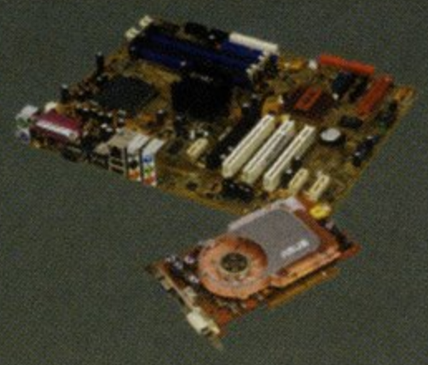

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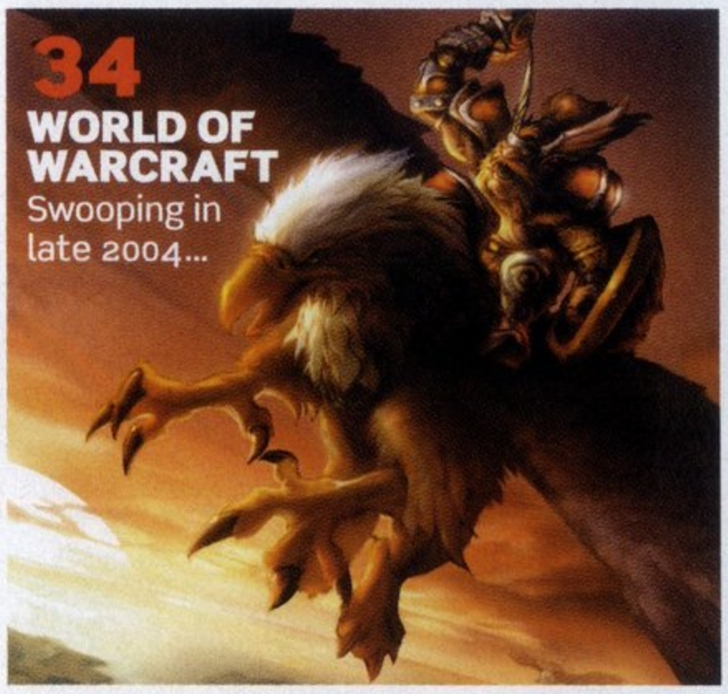

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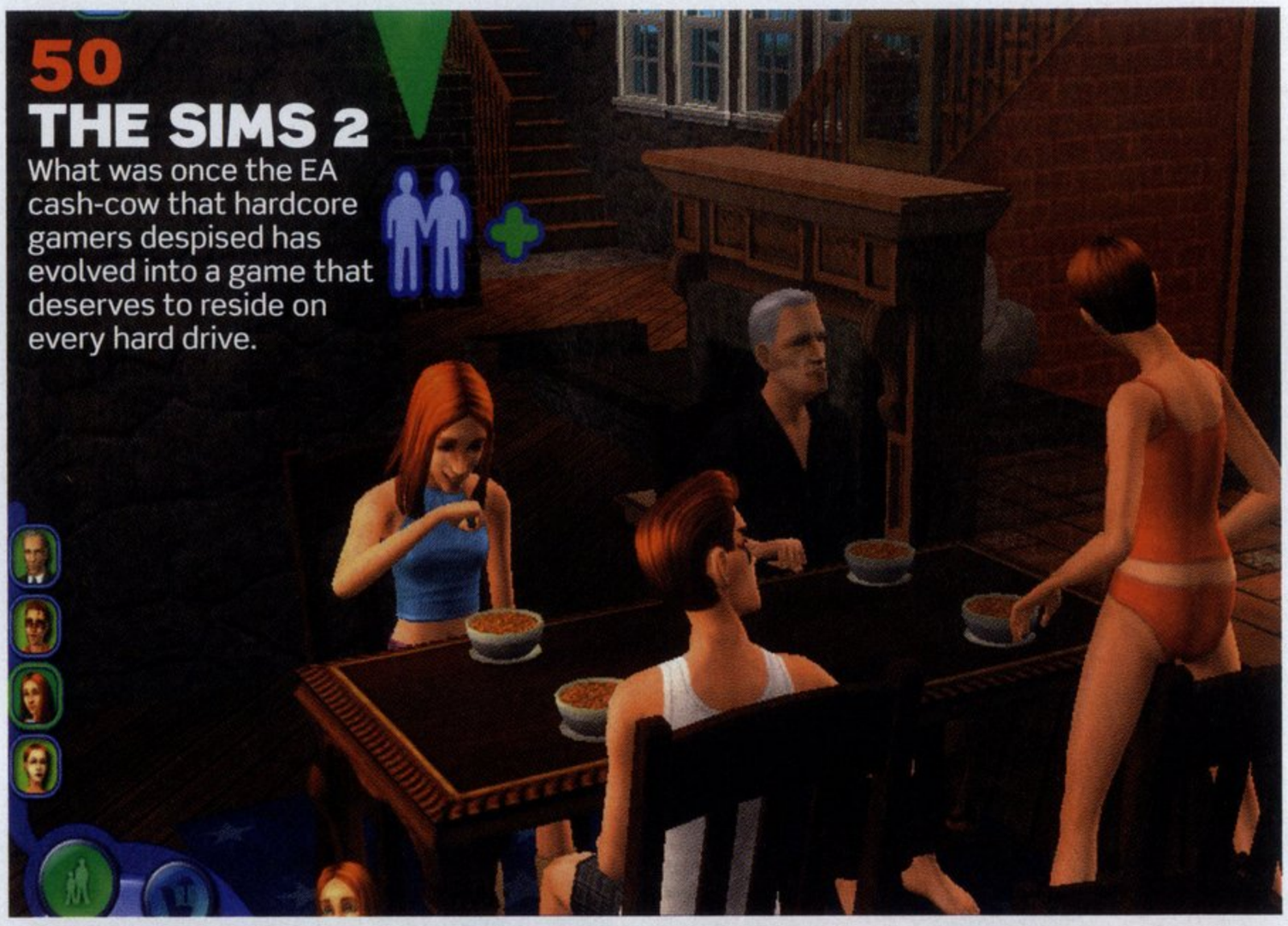
Swooping in late 2004...



50 THE SIMS 2
What was once the EA cash-cow that hardcore gamers despised has evolved into a game that deserves to reside on every hard drive.

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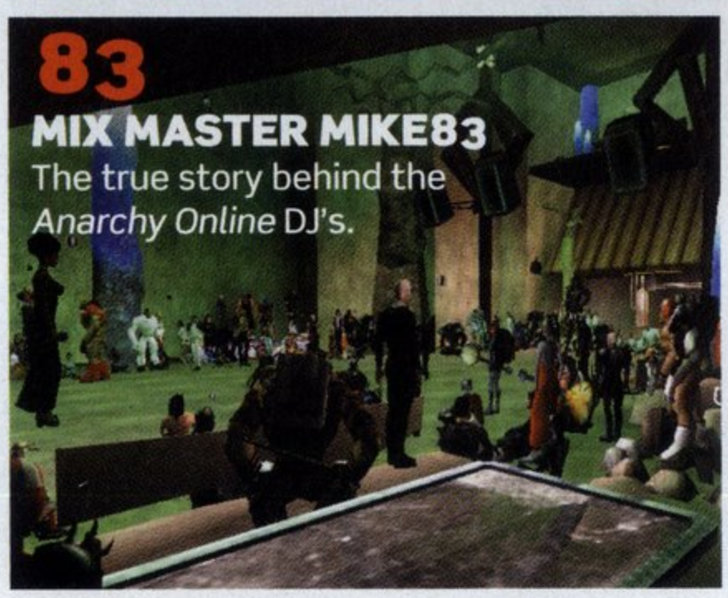

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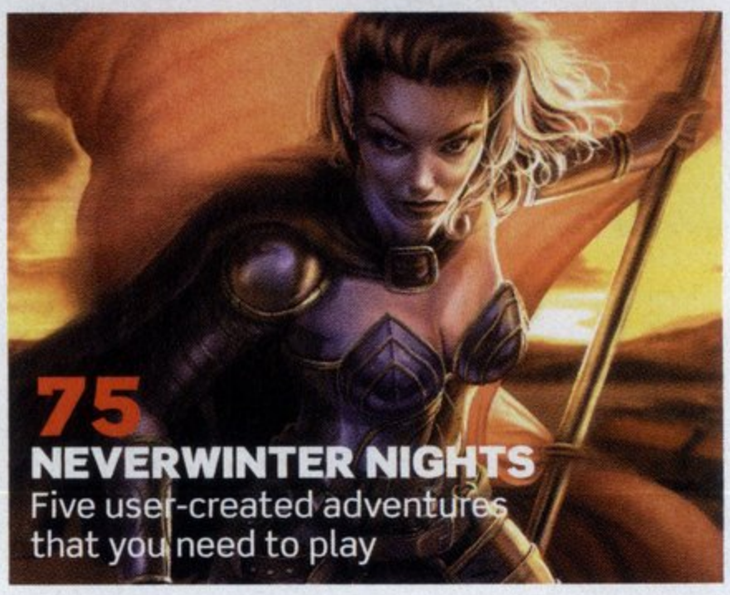
The true story behind the *Anarchy Online* DJ's.



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EXTRA-LIFE

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Eyewitness

YOUR MOST WANTED

Latest info on the games *you* want

The forbidden love between Johnathan and his seventy-foot, tripedal monster is captured by our intrepid news editor.

1 HALF-LIFE 2 RELEASE DATE TEASER

The circumstantial evidence is almost damning: Valve are on the home stretch with *Half-Life 2*.

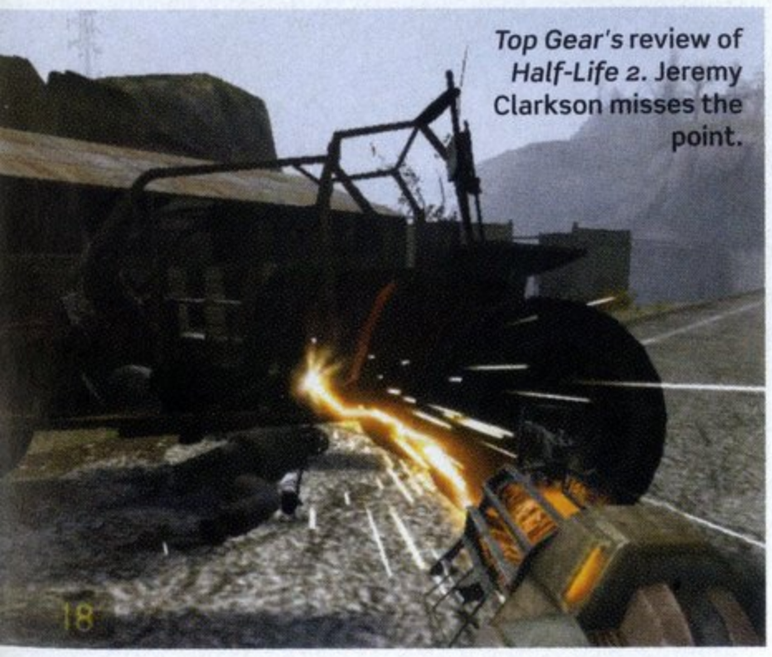
Valve's CEO Gabe Newell recently announced that they intend to pass the final version to publishers Vivendi in August, which would put them on track for a September release.

Aside from the finished game, they also announced a playable beta of *CS: Source* – that's *Counter-Strike* running on the *HL2* engine – would be released soon. The full item on **www.steampowered.com** states: "Starting later this summer, Valve will be conducting a limited-time beta of *Counter-Strike: Source* via Steam. The beta will first be open to subscribers of the Valve Cyber Café Program, and then extended to owners of *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*."

Valve also took *CS: Source* to Seoul, Korea, with the first publicly playable code. The event had two top Korean teams showing off their 1337 skillz before Joe Public got their hands on it. How was it received? Well, the obviously unfinished code is missing animations and weapons and still requires fine-tuning, but it retains the spirit of *Counter-Strike*. One Nadomola, of **www.csnatrion.com**, who played the game, bafflingly described it in golf terms: "I can't call it an albatross, but it could be a birdie or an eagle". Most informative.

With all this *CS*-related activity, we can only assume Valve are indulging in a bit of last-minute self-promotion before *Half-Life 2* is out. The fact that they think they can spare the time is encouraging.

Official ETA September
We say Vivendi won't confirm



Top Gear's review of *Half-Life 2*. Jeremy Clarkson misses the point.

"My gun's jammed! No, wait – it's marmalade."

2 ROME: TOTAL WAR HOG ROAST

Wacky tactics always bring a smile to our faces. We were given an exclusive review of *Rome: Total War* this month, and our new favourite stratagem shows off just how ingenious those ancient generals could be.

The scene: Greeks and Romans are fighting for strategic control of the coast. Hammering across the greenery come the elephants. Like tanks with legs, almost invulnerable to man. But not to pig (read the review). In what is probably a first for PC gaming, we're shown that the best way to deal with elephants is to cover pigs in tar, set fire to them and let them loose. The flaming porkers run around the feet of the elephants, causing fiery pandemonium. And the best bit? When the battle's over, everyone can sit down and enjoy a bit of crackling.

Official ETA September
We say We know they're right.

ess

3 THE SIMS 2 SILLY DON

We thought we'd give you one last glimpse of what to expect in *The Sims 2* on our DVD. Picture this... Don's a bit of a lothario, but falls in love with Sarah. They marry. Don's needs are different to Sarah's: he's a lot more social and flirtatious. He needs to feel attractive. Sarah's a romantic at heart: she needs a strong, loving bond to exist. And it does, with her and Don's little boy Alex.

The interaction between Sarah and Alex, with her desire to see him grow up and his need to grow up, makes it happen. During her little boy's birthday party, he suddenly spurts several years growth – like he's been sprinkled with fairy dust. Sarah's happy, but the birthday party is full of bikini-clad ladies, and it's too much temptation for Don. He starts canoodling in the poolhouse with a babe. Sarah's sister walks in.

The result is pure Malibu Beach: Sarah's sister tells her what's going on, Sarah collapses. Don comes out and apologises, Sarah recovers. Then the 'other woman' shows up. Sarah's sister launches at her, claws out. The pair tear into each other, and for all these Sims, life will never be the same again.

Official ETA September
We say *Yep,* **we have it in hand...**

"I'm a mighty elephant. Rarrr... Oh, it's no good. My heart's just not in this 'war' thing anymore. Peace!"

Sarah's happy, but the party is full of bikini-clad ladies...

Maybe if you stare enough, the rest will fall off too? *World Of Warcraft*

The Sims 2: this time it's incredibly personal.

4 WORLD OF WARCRAFT BETTER DEAD

The third 'push' in Blizzard's extended beta-test – push being Blizzard-speak for 'update' – is underway. With it comes a whole raft of new features, balancing tweaks and updates. Most striking of these is the new death system: there's no change to the actual mechanics of death – you can still run around as one of the non-living – but now as a corpse your entire view is cloaked in a deep black fog. It's more than a little chilling, and underlines the grim enormity of death. Until you 'rez', of course...

Players who plan to specialise in the trade skills will be pleased to know that auction houses are now up and running. You're able to put any objects that form a part of the game's economy up for sale to the highest ▶

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MY MOST WANTED

Register your excitement!

The Most Wanted chart is voted for by the PCGA readership. Every issue we compile your votes for the upcoming games you're most excited about and then hunt down the very latest news, screenshots and insider information we can uncover. On top of helping us help you, the voter with the best reason for their number #1 choice wins a game!

MY TOP FIVE MOST WANTED GAMES:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

Name _____

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In 25 words, what's best about your #1 game?

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Send your entries to:
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Or vote by web pwww.pcga.com.au

YOUR 10 MOST WANTED

bidder. Our Tim's already making a fast buck hawking mechanical squirrels to the American beta testers. Someone rescue him, before all sense of reality is lost.

Official ETA September
We say November

5 STALKER PSYCHIC DOGS

Stalker's weird zone setting is populated by some highly disturbing creatures. We've witnessed dogs with psychic powers, invisible bloodsuckers and becloaked telekinetic types.

The psychic mutts aren't man's best friend either. As vicious as rottweilers bred by football thugs, the irradiated pooches can mess up your aim by emanating psychic signals. These warp your vision and drag your arms all over the place. Walkies!

The bloodsuckers' invisibility and great strength are initially a shock. But, in a lovely touch that typifies the game, little dust plumes betray the presence of the transparent ones. So keep your eyes peeled, before someone peels them for you.

The hilariously deformed 'pseudo-giant' was up next. We shouldn't laugh, particularly because this short-armed freak is one of the strongest creatures. He's got two huge legs attached to his chin, and two tiny arms on the side of his face. His unique physiology forces him into battering ram charges, but his incredible strength makes him hard to take out.

The final baddie we were shown is the 'burer'. This weak, squat creature has telekinetic powers, and throws all manner of pointy things at you using the power of his lobes. His shtick is to keep you at a distance, because if you get right up close you can take him out with one shot.

Official ETA October
We say 2005, more like

6 BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH ORGANIC UNITS

The beauty of *LotR: Battle for Middle-Earth* is in the detail. Little touches of character that say "this is Middle Earth". The game is built using the ageing *C&C Generals* engine, so the developers have devoted a great deal of energy to imbuing the units with the kind of personality that does credit to the movies. Witness the Balrog: huge, glowing, and with molten lava cracking the surface of his skin. Yet when he crushes the life out of an attacking soldier he daintily sprinkles the ash from his fingers like adding pepper to a pot of soup.

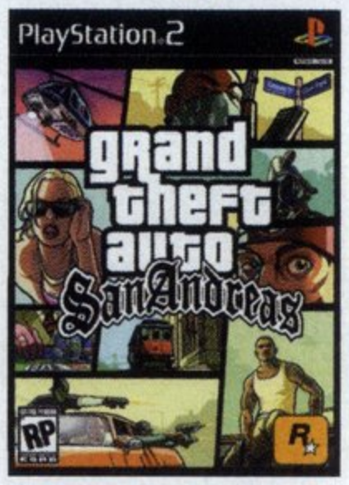
And then there's the Fell Beast. This huge pterodactyl-type mount ripples with detail. He spreads his wings and floats gracefully down to the ground, or speeds up the thumping whooshes of his mighty pinions to rise to a higher perch. It's beautiful.

Official ETA November
We say EA won't mess about with this. It'll be ready.

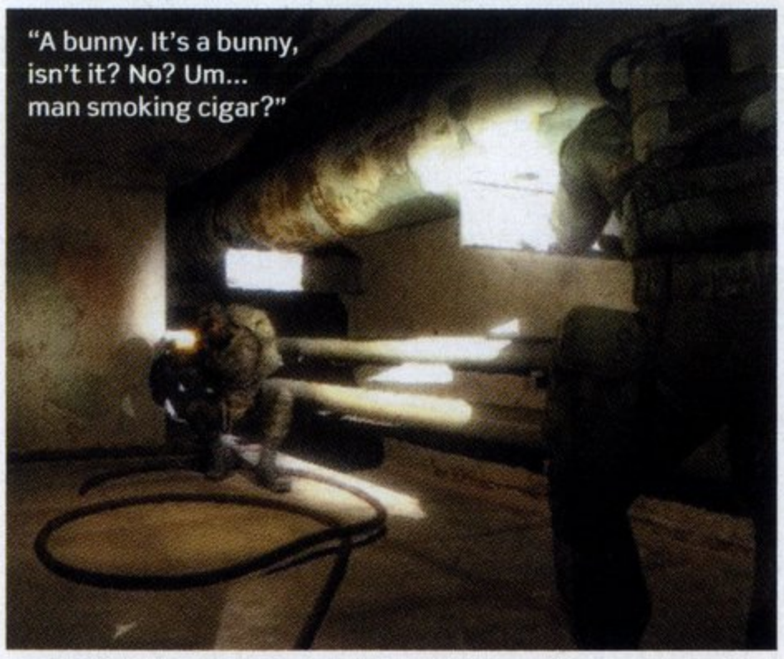
7 THE MOVIES DIRECTOR'S CUT

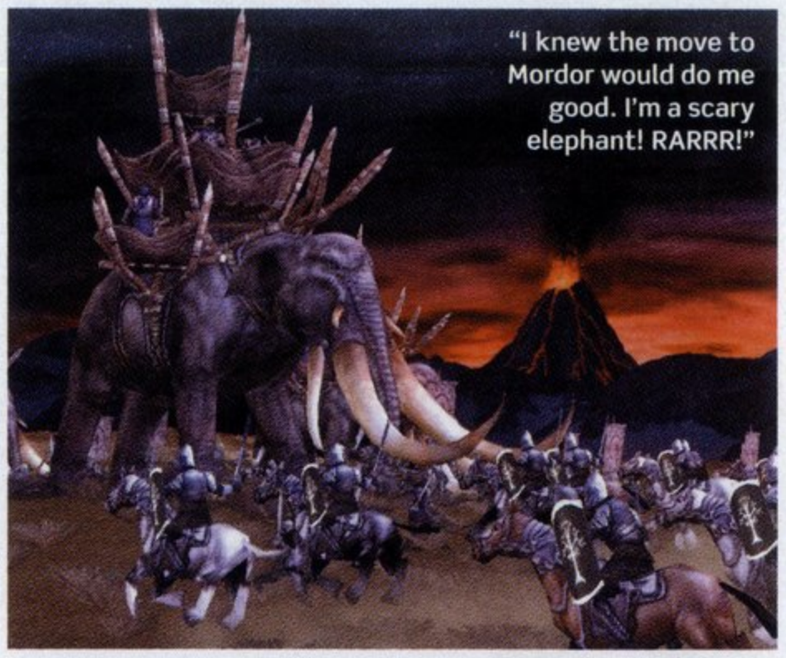
Typical. *The Movies* isn't even out, and Peter Molyneux's already got his big brain working on the 'Director's Cut' version of his game. As the name suggests, this expansion will enable

Gently squeeze until your enemy's windpipe crumbles



The PS2 box art is already finished. We're getting impatient *already*.



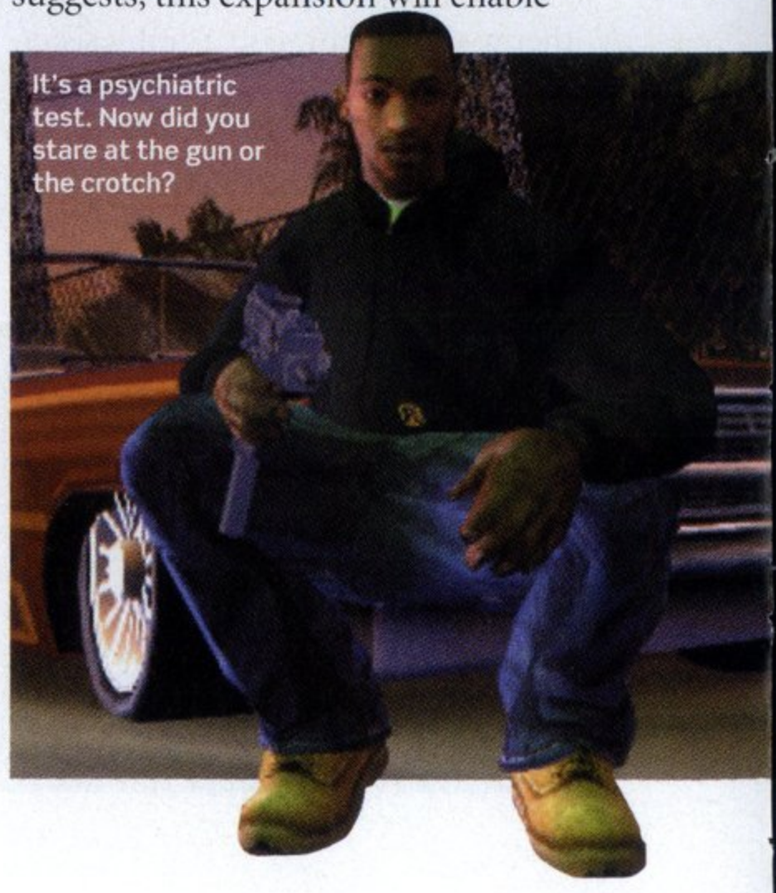


YOUR MOST WANTED CHART

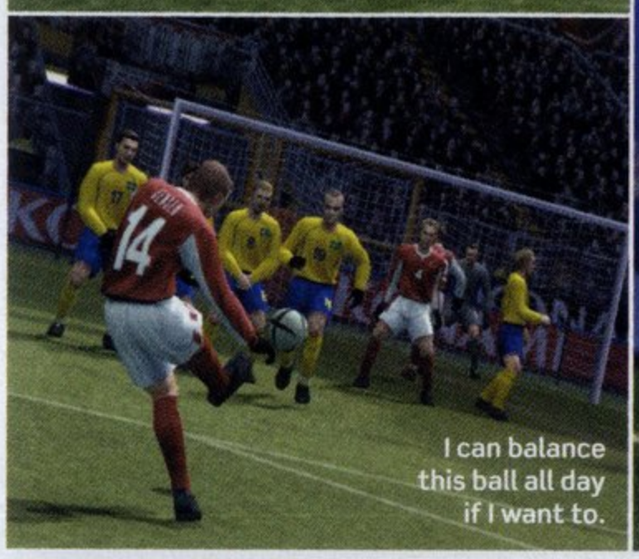
The people have spoken...

Look at all those Septembers. You voters are going to have to get your thinking caps on pretty soon. *Half-Life 2* led the way from the start, with everything else struggling to keep up. *The Sims 2* has a surprisingly high position, but that's good, because so's the game. It's good to see *Stalker* in there: it's got the look of a winner all over it. And an expansion pack just misses out!

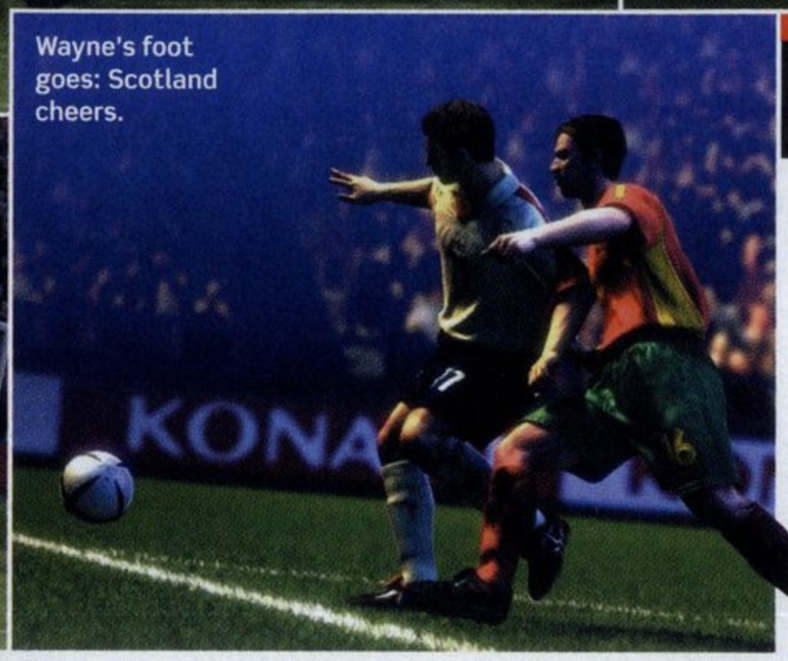
POSITION	GAME WANTED	VOTE SHARE	ETA
1 (1)	*Half-Life 2*	37%	September
2 (2)	*Rome: Total War*	16%	September
3 (5)	*The Sims 2*	10%	September
4 RE	*World of Warcraft*	10%	November
5 RE	*Stalker*	9%	2005
6 (6)	*LotR: Battle for Middle-Earth*	9%	November
7 RE	*The Movies*	2%	2005
8 NEW	*GTA: San Andreas*	2%	2005
9 NEW	*KotOR2*	1%	2005
10 RE	*MoH: Pacific Assault*	1%	September
NEAR MISS	*Call of Duty: United Offensive*	1%	September



We know where this is going. Ouch.



I can balance this ball all day if I want to.



Wayne's foot goes: Scotland cheers.

ONE TO WATCH

PRO EVOLUTION 4

■ **Publisher** Konami ■ **Developer** In-house

Console soccer king *Pro Evo* has always been the crowning example of the yearly sports update. Each new version is slicker, faster, and more intuitive. On PC we can look forward to the next release by the end of the year, bringing with it an on-screen ref, improved passing, free kicks and penalties. And it's all fully licensed, so no more 'Lake District' vs 'Connaught', real team names as default. Woo!

Craig once owned a 'glow sword'...

every budding auteur to wield even more control over the action. And the lights. And the camera.

Given the way videogame fandom goes, can anyone else see an annual, glitzy award ceremony being set up for the best *Movies* movies of the year? They could call it The Peters.

Official ETA Early 2005
We say 2005 sounds safe

8 GTA: SAN ANDREAS FANDOM

This is why we love fans. Take a look at the box artwork (PlayStation 2, natch) provided for *San Andreas* on the opposite page: see the girl doing the sexy open-mouthed tongue thing? Naturally we have no idea what this supposed to symbolise – perhaps she's about to lick an extra tasty ice cream. But a fan on **www.gtagaming.com** noticed a shape reflected in her sunglasses: a dark silhouette. We couldn't figure out what it was, but A.D.I.D.A.S_KoRN on the website says it bears an uncanny resemblance to the back-end of a Porsche 911 Turbo. Has the secretive world of the next *GTA* been cracked open? Only time will tell. PC GAMER: your Number One source for unsubstantiated rumour.

Official ETA "When it's done"
We say February 2005. Six months after the PS2 launch

9 KOTOR2 TAKING THE SITH

Let's face it, just as the devil has all the best tunes, so the Sith have all the best Force powers. And we can let you know that the best Sith power of all will be in the next *KotOR*. Force Crush – the one where you make a hand like a pair of pincers and gently squeeze until your opponent's windpipe crumples – has now been added to the game.

But for all you wishy-washy Ben Kenobi types who believe in peace and love, there's another, non-lethal power available. Force Sight lets you scan the area ahead and see through walls. It also shows you who else is good, bad or neutral. Just before they crush your throat with their mind power, most probably.

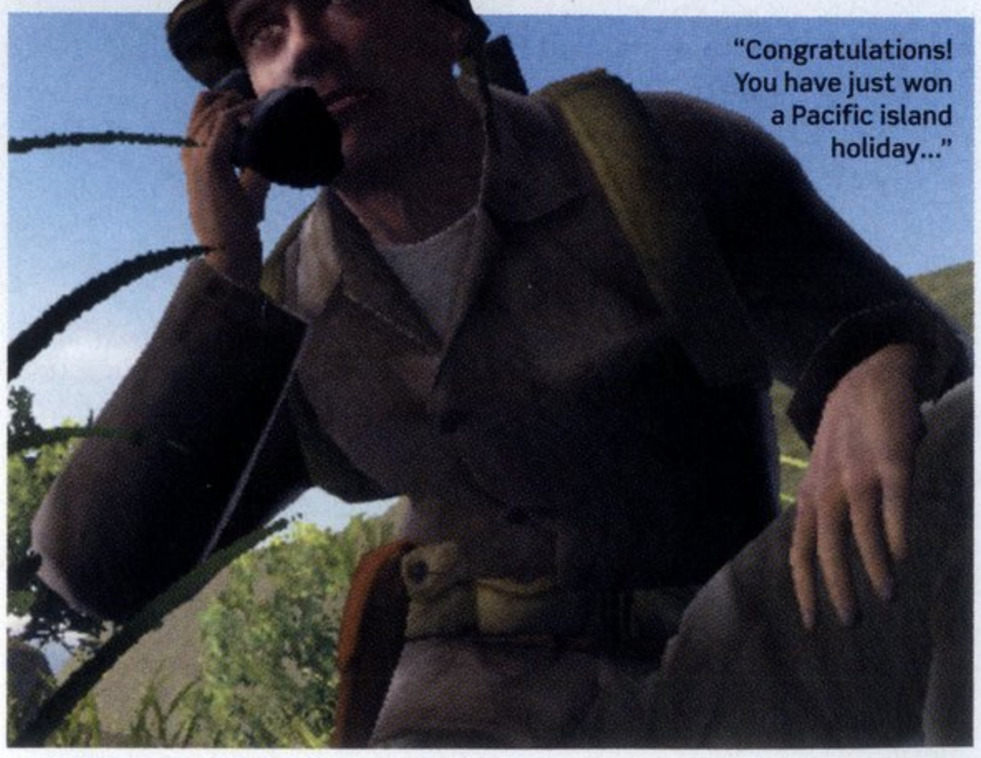
Official ETA February 2005
We say Anything could happen

KotOR2: it's a navel sim.

10 MOH: PACIFIC ASSAULT BREAKDOWN

EA's *Pacific Assault* won't include vehicles in multiplayer. The decision has been made to speed along the development. Concerns over it taking too long to balance the game if vehicles were included proved a driving factor (*Stop that* – Ed). But with the loss of the jeeps and boats comes a new multiplayer mode. Invader's an innovative team game in which the capture points move each time, dragging the offensive team into the level to the final spawn point. The defensive team must stop them before the level times out.

Official ETA September
We say The 24th we reckon



"Congratulations! You have just won a Pacific island holiday..."

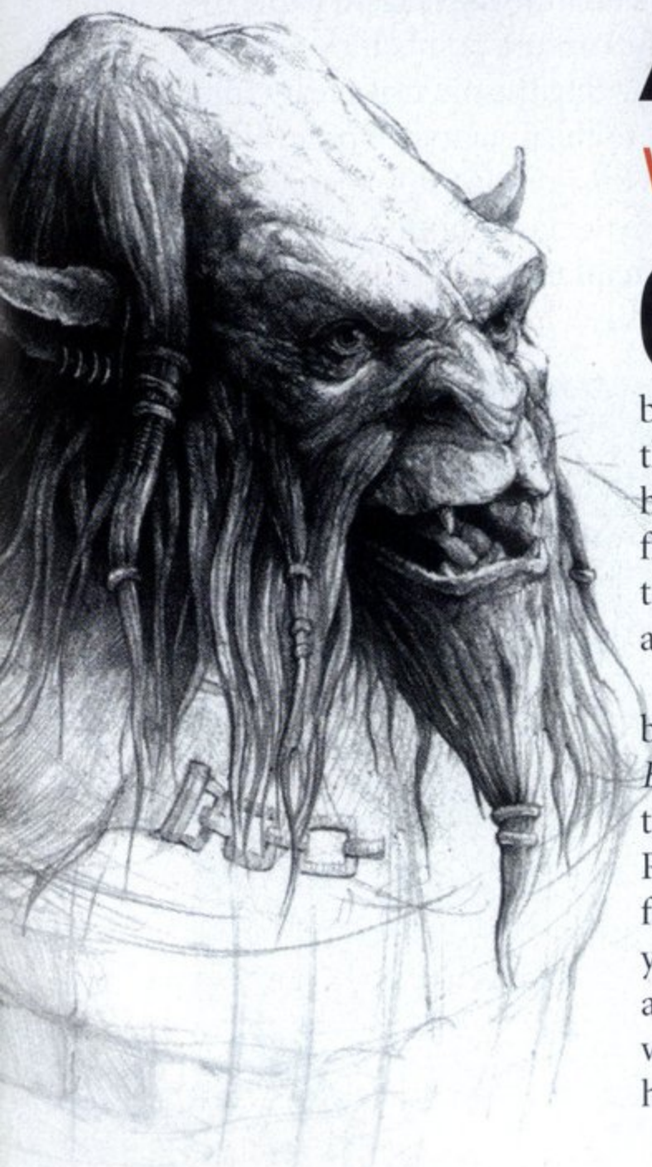
ARMIES OF EXIGO WILL TAKE YOU TO A NEW LEVEL BECAUSE...
›Two-tiered strategy tests your concentration ›The best of *Warcraft III* is brought up to date ›It has three very different sides and many novel units ›Destructible scenery is always fun

BUG WATCH
The Deep, one of the three playable sides, consists of various unnameable beasties. Hmm. They look a bit like the bugs in Starship Troopers to us, though.

NOW THAT'S MAGIC
Most units have special attacks or abilities which can be researched. This Dryad can summon a spirit bear to fight alongside your troops, for example.

READY, AIM...
Each faction has plenty of unique units, such as this Imperial missile-thrower. We'll have to wait and see if the necessary balancing act has been successful.

Scoop!



ARMIES OF EXIGO

What lies beneath?

Casting through EAs' forthcoming releases, you could be forgiven for missing this RTS curio. Almost hidden amid the sequels, film licences and sports titles, *Armies of Exigo* cuts an eccentric figure.

But EA aren't in the business of taking risks: *Exigo* has everything it takes to succeed in the RTS world. Taking its cues from *Warcraft III*, it puts you in control of three armies in a fresh fantasy world: the Empire of human knights and elves; the ogres, trolls and lizardmen of the Beast faction; and the dark elves, evil knights and horrid skittering things of the Fallen. Initially, the action seems almost identical to Blizzard's 2002 benchmark. There are small numbers of beautifully animated units in a richly stylised world, there's resource collection, and the construction of typical building types. The big difference is, *Exigo* takes you underground.

RTS traditions dictate that your strategies take place on a single plane. Here, though, you'll be able to use caverns and tunnels beneath the battlefield to circumvent enemy defences, perform surprise attacks and otherwise outwit your enemy. Likewise, you'll have to be aware of enemy subterranean movements. Maps will feature entrances to this underworld, and some units will be able to dig.

Four multiplayer modes indicate a determination on EA's part to break into the huge competitive strategy game market. Indeed, this summer's announcement of *Exigo* coincided with EA's setting-up of a Far East office. Such a two-pronged attack on the huge popularity of *Starcraft* in South Korea might, like the game, prove highly successful. In a gaming sense though, it's like trying to challenge an established religon.

ROSS ATHERTON

README
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Black Hole Entertainment
ETA Late September

GRAPHICS BY ATI™ CERTIFIED

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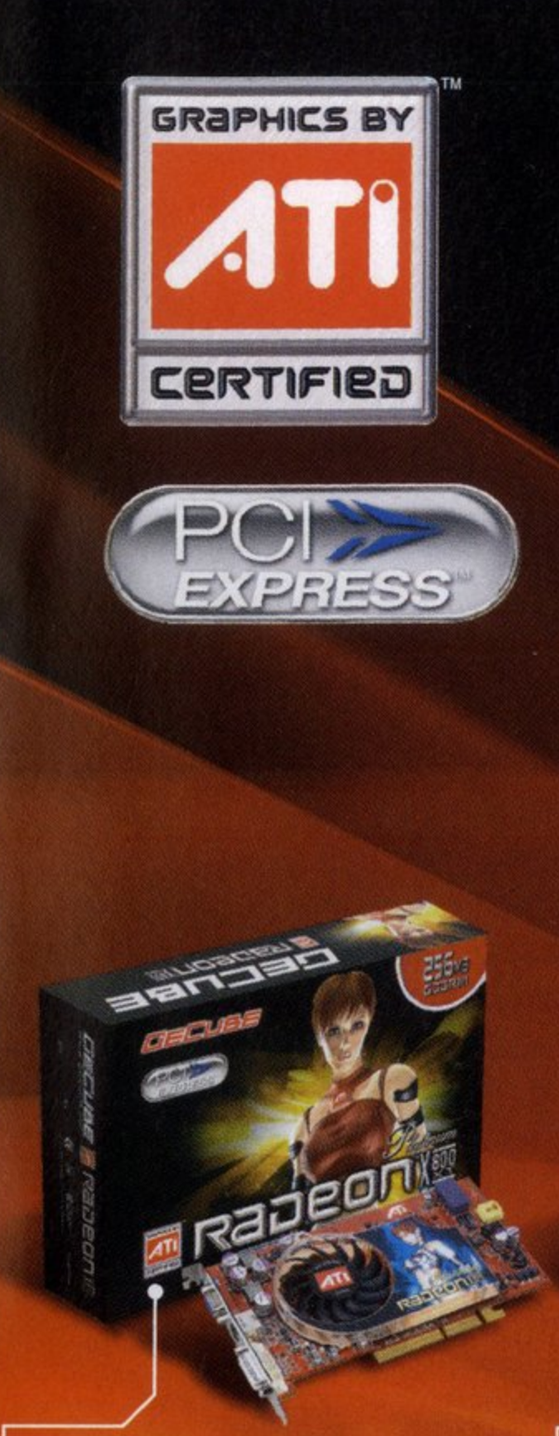

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Devil's Advocate

Piratehunt: it's the new Rollerball. Just without the ball.

MIKE ANDERIESZ
...used to be a respectable chap who we called on to do these sorts of pages with style and flair. Since we stuck a pair of horns on him he just makes bad jokes about stains. Needless to say, we're really sorry and he's not... Cheeky devil

Discuss this article at
http://forums.derwenthoward.com.au/viewforum.php?f=5

They say gamers are a useless bunch. They say we sit around, absorbing violence and consuming junk food, merely using up electricity and compounding global warming while contributing precisely nothing in return.

But I say it isn't true. I say gamers have a conscience, they have a sense of community, they know when the things they love are being stolen, and God knows they have skills. All they need is a purpose. So here's one I thought up earlier. Let's hunt pirates. No, not in Disney's new MMORPG Pirates of the Caribbean: Stain of the Pearl Necklace – I mean, let's hunt them in the street, the marketplace and yes, even the playground. Let's find and round up every software pirate, bootlegger and dodgy roadside trader, give them a 90 second head start, and then use our superior *Counter-Strike* skills to track 'em and smack 'em.

So you think $90 is too much to be paying for a game, do you? That's why you copy them online or swap them with your pals or buy them cheap from market stalls? Well tough, you parasitic scum. You're no friend of mine. Real gamers like games – we want to see more of them, we also want to see more music, more movies, more of everything we love when we're not playing games. And yes it hurts our pocket, and yes they should be cheaper... but that doesn't excuse a bunch of whinging thieves systematically ruining whole industries. Who's going to be making all these new games, movies and albums when everyone's nicking them from Kazaa – you, acne-boy?

But the good news, my friends, is that we can beat this and we don't need publishers, police or tabloids to help us. Here's how we'll do it. We'll start by making a list...

Write down the name of anyone you know who flogs hacked, cracked or jacked software; it could be a school friend, work colleague or some guy down the pub with a bin-liner full of CDs. When you've finished, add to the list any file sharers you know – the ones who reckon rock stars enjoy seeing their work stolen by talentless t(wits – Ed). You're not one of them, are you? Then why aren't you making a list?

Good. Now, when you've finished it keep it somewhere safe, because one day soon you'll receive further instructions. You see, real gamers are getting organised and finding out where the other real gamers are. Most of them work for developers (you can't create the new Babylon without builders) but there are plenty of games journalists, beta testers and online role-players too. Rest assured, when you get your instructions they will tell you where the nearest Piratehunt will occur and how to lure the people on your list to that location. You will be provided with chains, spiked gloves and quad-bikes on arrival.

The Cult of Real Gamers began in 1983 with one man, whose name remains a closely guarded secret. By 1993 we were still just a clan, looking for purpose in a world gone soft. But now we're a tribe; mobilised, motivated, and miffed as only a tribe of under-sexed troglodytes can be. And when we've finished with pirates, we're coming after hackers and spammers too. Think you're gonna steal our future, do you?

Start running.

Actual software pirates may vary in attractiveness.

D-DAY

"London, Tuesday, June 6, 1944: Under command of General Eisenhower, Allied naval forces, supported by strong air forces, began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France." -- first broadcast communiqué after the start of the Normandy Invasion

And so it begins....

NORMANDIE 1944 — la mémoire — 60ème ANNIVERSAIRE

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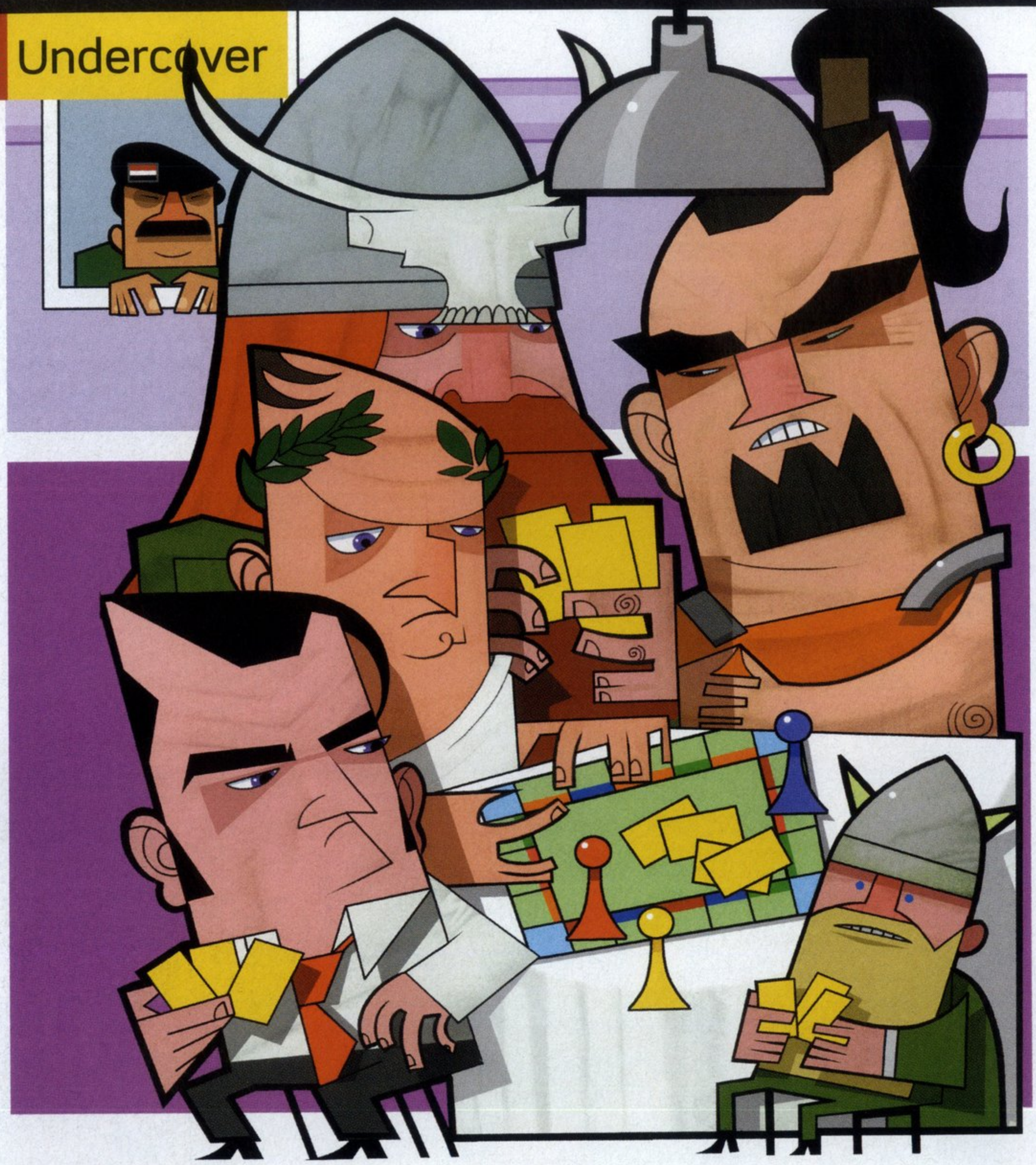

Illustrations by David Lyttleton

PSSST! It's...

The Spy

Human Sacrifice to Cannibal Monk: my ass is in the pot. The buns are on the boil. We hope you enjoy your meal.

On PC GAMES ADDICT's Secret Service

When developers talk, without PR minders to button their lips, The Spy is on hand to pick up the real story.

So when Soren Johnson, lead developer of Firaxis Games, took to the stand at the GDC The Spy sneaked in, switched on his eavesdropping device, and grabbed the details.

Readers, The Spy gives you **Civilization IV**.

Firaxis have taken a wish list from fans, all 200,000 words of the thing, to gauge what needs to be done to appease the community. **Civ IV** will thus be set in a "continuous, immersive 3D world", which means if you can see it, you can in some way manipulate it.

They're also going to attempt to strip much of the micro-management out of the game. Gone are 'unfun' elements such as "pollution, rioting, maintenance, corruption/waste". Intriguingly, the new features they hope will revitalise the format will be drawn from the religious and civic aspects of human culture.

The Spy was shocked to discover how far into development the game is. Soren reveals: "We have a working multiplayer system already, and have been playing four-hour games after work." The damn thing is already playable. Excellent.

There's been a disturbing, if understandable, twist on **The Sims 2** website. Specifically, the FAQ no longer mentions the possibility of gay marriage. As Bush does his best to 'redefine' the American Constitution to specifically state that marriage is twixt a man and a woman. it's little wonder that EA are 'lowering the profile' of that particular aspect of their game. Being caught up in a whirlwind of controversy is the last thing they need with **The Sims 2** now landing. And speaking of **The Sims 2**, EA have some interesting expansion pack schemes. Surprise. Surprise. Except that they're planning special 'Generations' packs that will appeal to different parts of the game's audience: kids, adults and OAPs.

You practically have to be an OAP these days to remember the brilliant **Freespace** space combat game but, nevertheless, Part Three is being considered by Derek Smart, of **Universal Combat** fame.

And while we're gazing at the stars, the question is, what will id do now that **Doom 3's** out the door? The devil makes work for id-le thumbs, so it would seem that **Return to Castle Wolfenstein 2** is on the cards. Though development duties will be handled by another, as yet unrevealed, developer.

It certainly won't be Bioware who have plenty on their plate of sequels now that **Baldur's Gate 3** and **Neverwinter Nights 2** are in production, and already playable.

And to complete the sequel spillage, another leaky mouth has revealed to The Spy that the next **Diablo** installment is underway at Blizzard.

Finally, If you don't want The Spy in your hard-drive, then look out for Windows XP security fixes bundled with Microsoft's Service Pack 2, which should have been in contact with you by now.

Spy out.

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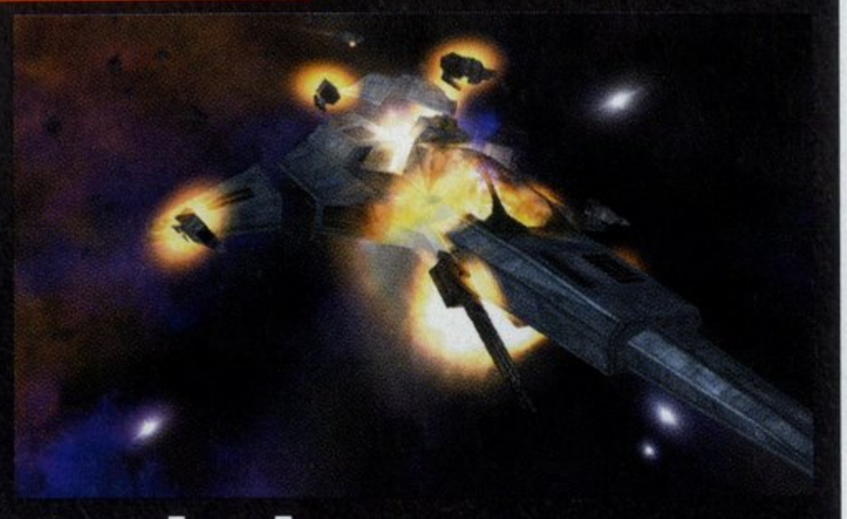
CD-FREE



Jackal

No CD finally cracked

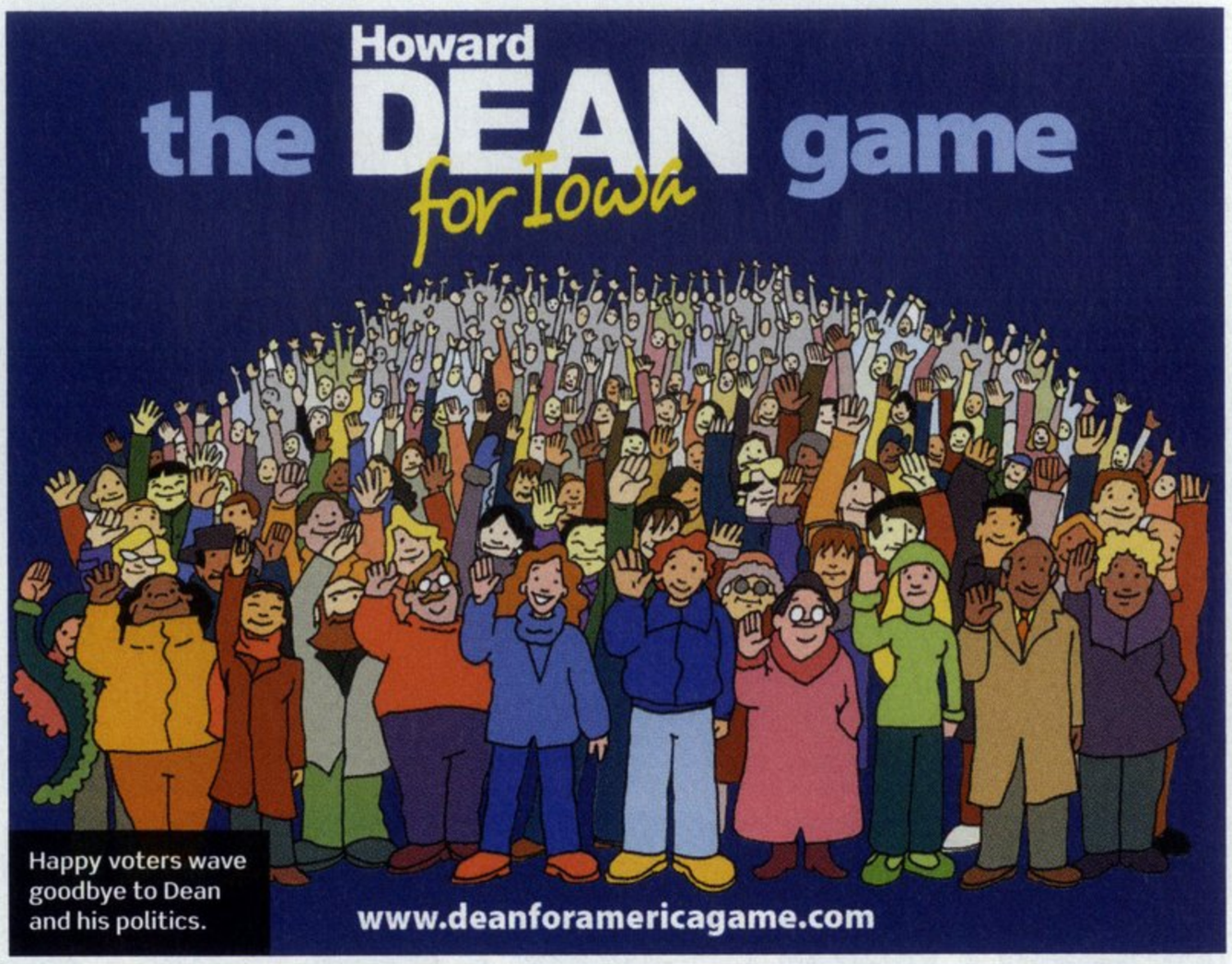
CDs are a necessary evil for PC gamers. They're scratchable, easy to lose and bigger games come on an unwieldy number of them. If only there was another way...

Well, there is. Game Jackal removes the need to have the game CD in the drive, by reading the disc and saving a small profile. Whenever you need to play the game, you click on the profile instead of inserting the CD. Assuming you've stored the game CD safely, it need never be lost or scratched, as you only need to use it once. The game's also quicker to load up when you play.

The natural conclusion, then, is that this is a pirate's dream. So we showed it to Julien Merceron, Worldwide Technical Director of Ubisoft, who reckons: "The more ease-of-use and flexibility you give to a player, the better. Shortening the time it takes from 'I want to play' to 'I'm now playing' is crucial. On the other hand, Game Jackal could be dangerous if it makes piracy easier."

But Game Jackal apparently generates a specific key for your computer, and trading profiles between installs is impossible. We tested it, and it worked perfectly. If the makers can lock down the potential exploits, then Game Jackal could become a handy mainstay of PC gaming.

Find out more about this nifty ap to cut down on CD swapping:
www.gamejackal.com



Strafe right

How to make games and influence people

American politicians regularly cite the dangerous, mind-manipulating influence of videogames on the public. So it was only a matter of time before they thought of using interactivity for their own ends.

Persuasive Games claim to "design, build, and distribute electronic games for persuasion, instruction, and activism."

It's a mission statement that has certainly persuaded American politicians to commission games that sell their message through the medium of fun.

Dean for Iowa is their first effort and it's surprisingly good. It was used during Howard Dean's campaign to become the Democratic Presidential candidate. Players could control campaigners on door-to-door, leafleting and placard-waving missions. The aim was to spread Dean's message across the in-game map by meeting and greeting as many people as possible. Players were rewarded with their own avatars, which also enabled them to see exactly who was 'owning' the campaign trail.

Dean's hope was that players would enjoy the virtual campaign experience so much that they'd repeat it for real on the streets. Dean lost – albeit to Democrat golden boy John Kerry.

With the elections over, *Dean for Iowa* is now defunct as a political tool. But, as an early attempt to create a game intended to influence voters, it's an interesting experiment that is sure to be repeated in the future.

README

Publisher Persuasive Games
Developer In-house
Link http://tinyurl.com/4umsc

GfK THE PC TOP 10 CHART

Just shuffling the deck...

A statistical wonder took place this month. For the first time ever the top 10 selling games of the month are all still there a month later.

The thing we're utterly mystified about is how those expansion packs for the *Sims* keep selling. Think about it, it's like almost every person who buys the *Sims* also buys packs for it. It's no shockl then that *the Sims 2* already has expansions in the works.

Not just a flash in the pan? Let's see if *Yu-Gi-Oh!* survives *the Sims 2*.

POSITION	GAME	PUBLISHER
1 (2)	*The Sims: Deluxe*	EA
2 (1)	*Yu-Gi-Oh! Power of Chaos*	Atari
3 (3)	*The Sims: Unleashed*	EA
4 (4)	*The Sims: Superstar*	EA
5 (7)	*The Sims: Makin' Magic*	Ubisoft
6 (10)	*Rise of Nations*	EA
7 (5)	*Monopoly 2003*	EA
8 (6)	*The Sims: Vacation*	EA
9 (9)	*Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*	Vivendi
10 (8)	*The Sims: Hot Date*	Microsoft

On the Frontlines, There is but One Commandment.

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THIS IS HARDCORE

20,000 leagues under the genres

Dan 'Blind-luck' Toose

THIS IS...

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

The life of a sniper is fraught with danger. A clumsy lens flare is enough to give away your position, a breath enough to sway your aim off the target and take out his kitten instead. Kittens taken out by friendly fire: who could live with themselves? Enough waffle: *Sniper Elite: Berlin 1945* is Rebellion's take on this alternative lifestyle.

You're an American, with a skill for 'sploding heads with a single shot. You're also in Berlin, hunting down Soviet nuclear plans, with a brief to thwart their schemes. Think sniper simulator rather than first-person shooter. It sounds a touch *Hitman*, with the emphasis on scoping the target area, calculating the best angle for money shot, then extracting yourself with professional calm. Co-op and multiplayer modes are promised, so now's the time to get in the mood and fit the sniper's best friends: the catheter and drip.

Riddickulous

Actually, it's pretty natty. Yes, a PC version of (deep breath) *The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay* is in the works. The Xbox version is wowing the gathering crowds with Diesel power, filling the *Doom III* void that blights their lives. Vivendi Universal Games have remained coy about the prospect of pulling the blind baldie over to the FPS platform of discerning folk, but mark our words, we'll be seeing *Riddick*'s brutal prisonbreak on our office Alienware.

"OK, who shot my kitten?"

Cross hairs with Dan at
dan@derwenthoward.com.au

Jere '^Logged-in' Lawrence

THIS IS...

ONLINE

So EA Seven years. That's how long *Ultima Online*, the first of the big budget MMORPGs has been running. Certainly an achievement given that many predicted the game was doomed because of PKs, lag, poor customer service and a class action lawsuit. Yet *UO* flourished and although many in the west tired of it quickly a massive and long lasting market in Asia ensued.

How fitting it is then that the latest expansion to *UO* is all themed around Japanese history and mythology. Two new classes are on hand, the ninja and Samurai. The Samurai class is a beefed up warrior with a number of special abilities such as honourable execution, while the ninja will be a hybrid stealth/warrior class with some neat tricks up their robes, sleeves, whatever. They can create mirror images of themselves to confuse enemies, drop a smoke bomb to make them disappear or transform into an animal to surprise enemies. Beware the ninja chicken.

Moving to Asia hasn't affected Lord British one bit... *Ahem.*

Everquesting...

Prepare to feel a post-Olympic rush of pride because the number one ranked player of the massively popular *Everquest* is in fact an Australian. Complex server logging, tracking and scoring has verified that Robert Laus, aka Vabtoo, who comes from right here in Sydney, is both the number one player and leader of the number one guild Arch Overseers. Another Australian world champion. Oi! Oi! Oi!

Living online? Jape with Jere at
jerel@derwenthoward.com.au

THIS IS...

SIMULATION

Tim 'Kamikhazi' Stone

For months now, the PCGA photo-recon Spitfire (N for Nosey) has been flying low-level sorties over Microsoft Game Studios' Redmond HQ in the hope of spotting the kind of telltale tarpaulin-draped shapes that would confirm the existence of *Combat Flight Simulator 4*. So far; not a sausage, so we were understandably intrigued when, at the recent European Flight Sim Show, Oleg Maddox told us about the attention the E3 *Pacific Fighters* stand had received from Bill's men.

Norman wisdom

Idle curiosity or evidence that a palm-fringed *Combat Flight Sim 4* is in the pipeline? Only time will tell. One piece of sim speculation that *was* confirmed this month, was the rumour that a *Lock On* add-on was underway. Executive producer Carl Norman used the official forum to break the good news that a supplement featuring a fancy Frogfoot variant, improved flight models and enhanced cockpit features would be arriving early next year, and the bad news that the pack would – initially at least – only be published in Russia.

Later in the same fascinating thread, he went on to drop a tantalising hint about Eagle Dynamics' future plans for *LOMAC*: "I still want the Digital Battlefield. Our engine can be adapted to do more than just flight simulation."

Little Boys for big boys?

Break radio silence. Contact Tim at
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

Mark 'Coeur de' Donald

THIS IS...

STRATEGY/MANAGEMENT

There's a new hope for wargames. Earlier this month, we were privy to a demonstration of *Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders*, by South Korean developers Phantagram. It's a real-time strategy game with genes spliced with a fighting game – you take control of the commander of a force, ordering regiments and platoons to charge into medieval combat.

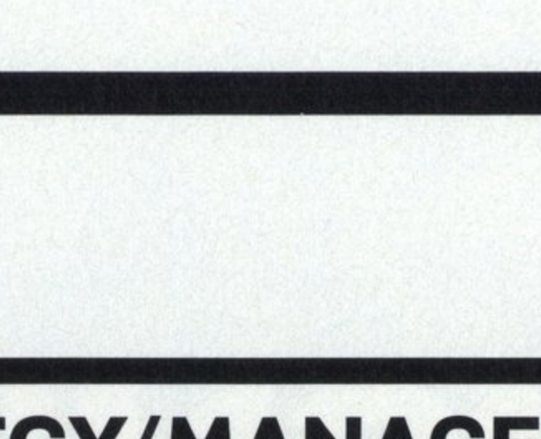
Then, when the battle is joined, you wade in, ankle deep in the blood and guts of the fallen, sword drawn, cutting a swathe through the enemy.

It's blood-pumping stuff, like stealing your way into a scene from Peter Jackson's battle-crazed brain. It really is that epic.

Unbridled

The artists at Phantagram have created some truly staggering creature designs, from saddled scorpions to headless, six-storey horses that churn the ground with every step. Dragons swoop down from out of the sky, scattering foot soldiers in their wake. Your eyes are drawn across the battlefield at the hundreds and hundreds of men dying for a cause, right there, in front of you.

So why not more on this title right now you ask? Well, presently they assure us there will be a PC version some time in the future, but for now, it's an Xbox exclusive. Ngh.



Kingdom Under Fire.

Cross swords with Mark at
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

THIS IS...

RPG/ADVENTURE

Eliot 'Fantasy-land' Fish

There has been some very good news of late with *Neverwinter Nights 2* getting underway over at Obsidian Entertainment, the studio made up mostly of ex-Black Isle developers. CEO, Feargus Urquhart announced, "Neverwinter Nights changed the very nature of roleplaying games. With Neverwinter Nights 2, we're going to take that incredible experience to the next level by combining a huge new single-player game with deep character development and many new upgrades and enhancements to the already powerful BioWare Aurora Toolset for the modding community."

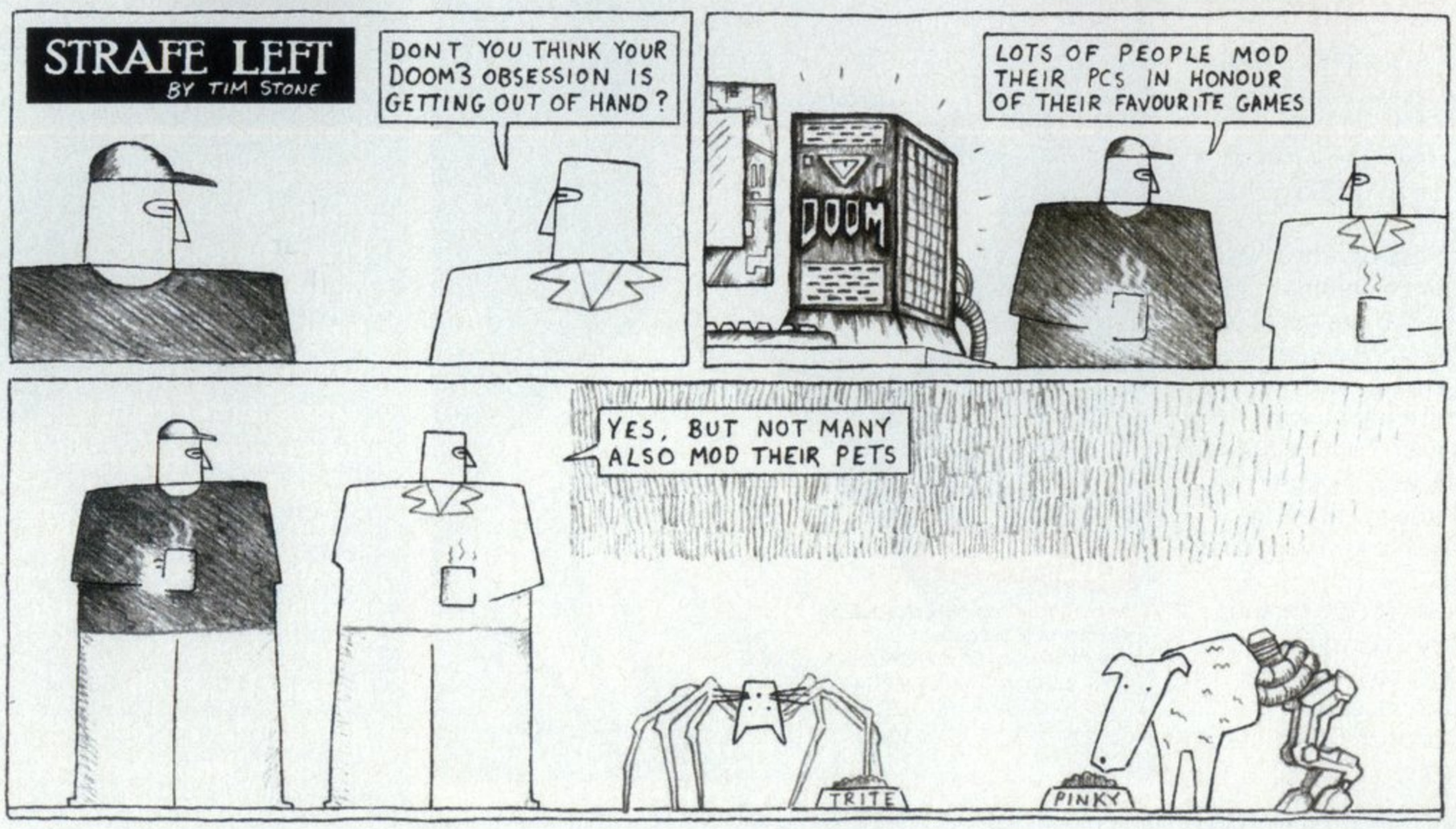
With a release date set for sometime in 2006, Obsidian will be doing a huge re-write of the Aurora engine to incorporate Direct X 9.0 technology whilst implementing the 3.5E version of the AD&D rule system.

All we know of the story is that it will be set in and around the city of Neverwinter, but Obsidian do plan on bringing some fun new ideas to the table. Urquhart has hinted at a new character creation system that goes beyond picking stats from a list and is likely more implemented into actual gameplay. The player will also maintain their own stronghold, returning to it at various points in the story – tres *Baldur's Gate*.

If it increases the immersion, then we'be all for it… In 2006.

NWN2 - You'll be chillin' and illin' with the illithid.

Fantasising? Just don't scare the Fish at
eliotf@derwenthoward.com.au


STRAFE LEFT
BY TIM STONE
DON'T YOU THINK YOUR DOOM3 OBSESSION IS GETTING OUT OF HAND?
LOTS OF PEOPLE MOD THEIR PCS IN HONOUR OF THEIR FAVOURITE GAMES
DOOM
YES, BUT NOT MANY ALSO MOD THEIR PETS
TRITE
PINKY

James 'Wizball' Cottee

THIS IS...

ODDBALL

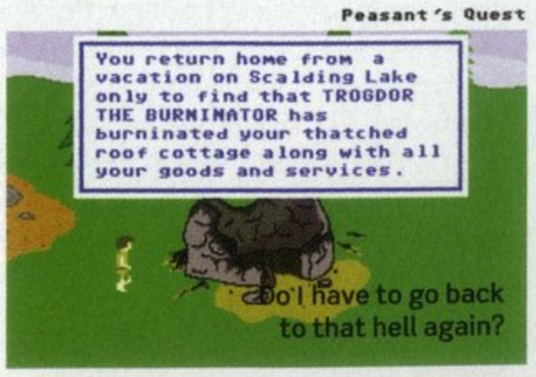
The huge popularity of **HomeStarRunner.com** is built on some solid foundations: surreal and hilarious animations, distinct characters, frequent updates, and a lovingly rendered circa 1982 pop culture aesthetic. No nostalgia for this period is more unwarranted than retro gaming, and it's this lust for the pixels of the past that the site has been milking with their warped Trogdor franchise.

Billed as the heavy metal creation of the mildly belligerent Mexican wrestler Strong Bad, Trogdor has starred in a crude Flash music video, and a Robotron-esque Flash game with the objective of "burninating" peasants (and their thatched-roof cottages). But now, the tables have turned with a new flash game played from the peasant's perspective.

Syntax Error

Peasant's Quest is an uncanny facsimile of the early Sierra games, fantasy quests that combined text parsers and crude static-screen EGA graphics. Now the nightmares of semantics and fantasy logic concocted by a young Roberta Williams live again, as you seek out revenge on the crudely drawn Trogdor for burninating your cottage to the ground.

For a simple gag, the HomeStar Runner team has put a staggering amount of work into making this just as frustrating as the PC games of yore. From the protracted, impenetrable campaign objectives to the laughable monsters and continuity errors, Peasant's Quest has got it all. They even mimic the bizarre programmer bios that adorned the game boxes of the era. **www.homestarrunner.com/disk4of12.html**


Peasant's Quest
You return home from a vacation on Scalding Lake only to find that TROGDOR THE BURNINATOR has burninated your thatched roof cottage along with all your goods and services.
Do I have to go back to that hell again?

Contact the quirky. Contact the Cottee!
jcottee@derwenthoward.com.au

Eyewitness Investigation

SEEING ISN'T BELIEVING

Special Report

Forget faster, says John Carmack. The future is *more*

At this year's Game Developer's Conference, the definitive annual forum for coders, John Carmack, high priest of game graphics, lobbed a grenade at the faithful. Faster graphics engines are no longer it, he says.

Cynics might suggest that Carmack has been tardy getting to the front line on this one. Scores of developers, perhaps even a majority, now use off-the-shelf engines – sometimes id Software's, sometimes rival offerings from Epic or Criterion – to power their games, rather than reinventing their own wheels-within-wheels whenever they start a new project. Most long ago realised that wherever they might compete for gamers' attention and wallets, it wasn't through fractionally faster polygon pushing.

But Carmack? This is the man whose coding genius was largely responsible for putting a rocket into PC gaming in the early '90s (in more ways than one) with his revolutionary first-person shooters. Yet not John Carmack, is behind the wheel?

Making Millions

Carmack makes the following observation: Computers today are a million times more powerful than when he started out in computing. At this rate, given another decade and a

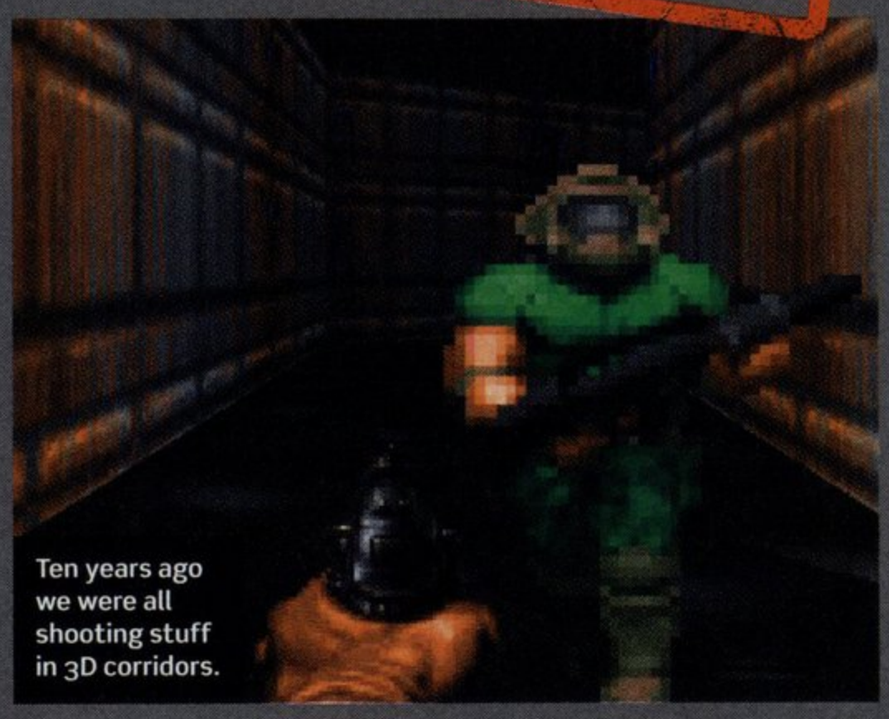
Faster graphics are no longer it, says Carmack

walking around this year's E3 game show, his point was abundantly clear. The difference between the best engines and the best of the rest is now only in the detail.

So if the engine of game progress is no longer the game engine, what is it? And who, if

half, scenes that currently take four of five hours to render will be running on our monitors at sixty frames per second. In terms of image fidelity, that's pretty much photorealistic.

Carmack's gripe is that game worlds still don't appear much like our own. While graphical



Ten years ago we were all shooting stuff in 3D corridors.

quality has improved out of all recognition, it has only shown up various other areas of 'world simulation' in games as woefully feeble.

Outside of a game, for example, a 'cluttered' desk from *Max Payne 2* would look like the clean work surface of minimalist architect. A 'crowded' nightclub in *Deus Ex 2* would appear to have been struck by anthrax in any real world city. Addressing this will require the computing power to physically represent and simulate much more 'stuff'. And, even more importantly, an awful lot of content to be created – and at a cost that allows the game to still make a profit.

Part of the solution will involve not just rendering but also creating much of the 'stuff' in games using computers – either during developme on the fly. This is al being hinted at by a of grow-your-own ju plug-in software tools which generate trees automatically rather than requiring an artist to model them.

But even harder than creating sufficient content is getting it all to interact sensibly. Carmack candidly admits that id Software shy away from character interaction, for instance,

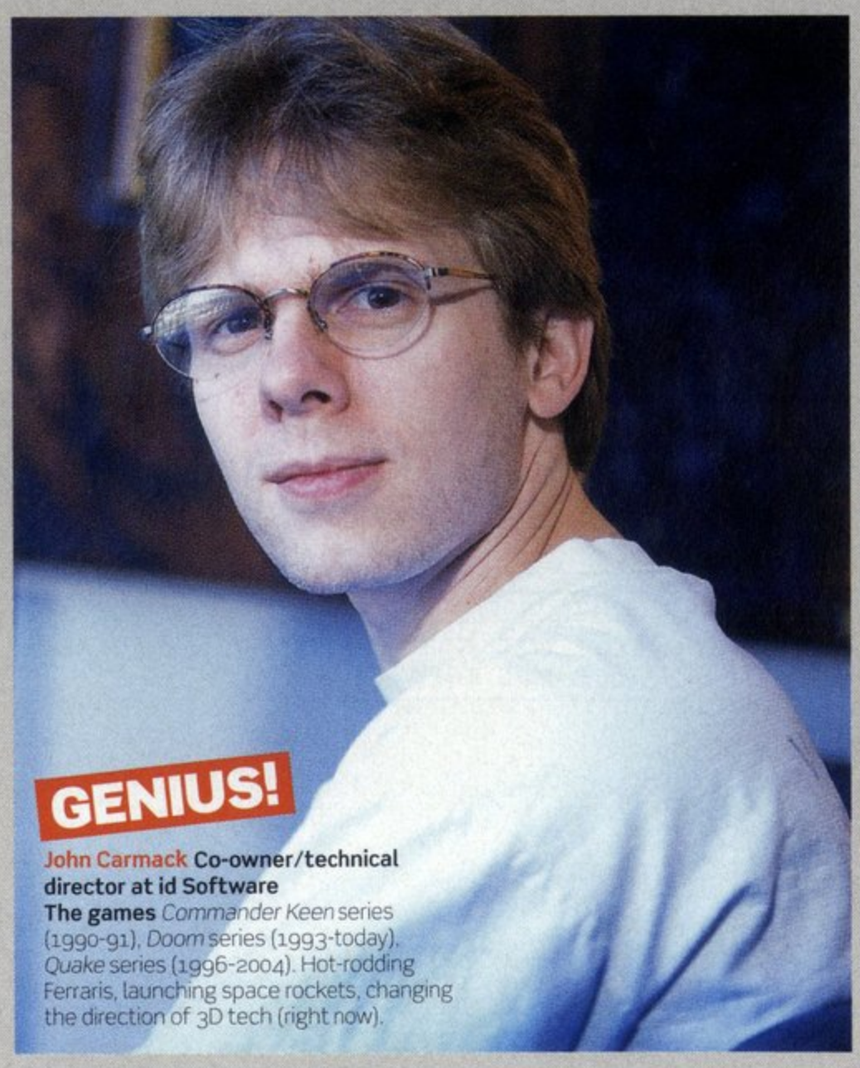
Small mercy

Why little may be the new big

It's possible that games will never actually fulfil their 'realism' potential. Perhaps even more surprising than Carmack's diminishment of the future importance of the graphics engine, is his questioning the role of big teams – or rather, the almost unanimous painting of a future for gaming that excludes smaller ones.

It is entirely possible, in Carmack's almost-heretical view, that the current straight road towards bigger games made with bigger budgets is actually a dead end. There may be kids working in a garage somewhere on a small game, he says, that use the upcoming processing power and development tools in an entirely new and creative way. Carmack warns current incumbents against thinking they are all powerful by citing the example of IBM, who thought they had the computer market sown up with their lumbering mainframes, only to miss the rodent-like emergence of nifty little PCs (and upstart Microsoft to boot...)

Somewhat wistfully, Carmack lamented at GDC that id Software has been boxed into a corner by its own success. He had no choice, he said, but to continue making bigger and more expensive games. It's rare that you hear smart millionaires speaking so frankly when inordinate amounts of dollars are on the line with their next game.



GENIUS!

John Carmack Co-owner/technical director at id Software
The games *Commander Keen* series (1990-91), *Doom* series (1993-today), *Quake* series (1996-2004). Hot-rodding Ferraris, launching space rockets, changing the direction of 3D tech (right now).

because it's near impossible to make it look right. However you want to define 'look right', we've all been there. In comparison with conversation with a real human being, talking to a game character is less satisfying – and barely more 'real' – than shouting warnings to Mr Punch.

Where these problems intersect, says Carmack, is when it comes to staffing up for huge projects. When Hollywood requires hundreds of staff, LA's expert CGI worker-bees are ready to march for you. But in games there's no common skill base. Getting artists up to speed is slow and expensive, and varies from game to game. Solving this problem will *require* technology to plateau, as only then will artists' tools and what's demanded of them be able to settle down. Just as Hollywood cameramen today don't have to keep learning new models, or how to change the lenses.

Self-destruction

What Carmack is saying is that the first big problem of game graphics is almost solved. In a few years, the game's rendering engine will have all the processing power it needs. But rather than sating our appetite, this will only leave us salivating for more from our games, and much of what we'll be baying for can be provided only by new game development production and management techniques, rather than clever hardcore coding.

It might sound a modest warning note, but coming from Carmack it's explosive. It's as if Moses got to the Red Sea and rather than parting it via divine intervention, instead started handing out buckets to his followers.

Carmack admits he's already struggling to get used to sharing his own game code with other programmers, now that he can no longer track it all himself. Just as the king of engine programmers is telling us to get used to the idea of the engine as being just another bolt-on part, he's also getting used to himself no longer being at the centre of the gaming universe.

OWAIN BENNALLACK

VENGEANCE REIGNS FROM ABOVE.

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RELEASE NOVEMBER

Prince of Persia 2

Prince of Persia 2 managed to turn more than a few heads at this year's E3, much as its predecessor, *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*, did the E3 before. Put simply, the evolution of the Prince has moved in leaps and bounds (pun absolutely intended) since the original game was released on PC in 1989 through Brøderbund Software. *Prince of Persia 1 & 2* on PC were very highly received and remain fan-favourites and PC classics, cited time and again for their approach to the 2D adventure game with the transcending of genres such as platforming, action and exploration. A third game called *Prince of Persia 3D*, however, did little to maintain the *Prince of Persia* design legacy and buried the series in a sandstorm of bad reviews and poor sales.

Eventually the franchise would rear its head again, under the banner of third-party giant Ubisoft in 2003 (although production actually begun in 2001), and once again with series creator Jordan Mechner, at the creative forefront.

THE PITCH

Cheat fate once again, thwart death & danger at every turn... Oh! And watch out for evil boobies!

The rest of the story is history; *Prince of Persia The Sands of Time* was released to critical acclaim and has squarely rooted the series as a next-generation mainstay on both PC and console, paving the way for a much anticipated sequel, which, as we mentioned, has taken to turning the heads of all who see it. Since E3, **PC Games Addict** has had a chance to really get a feel for the game as well as experience – first hand – the latest changes, which we might add are beginning to paint a feverishly lavish picture of true adventure and engagement.

Being able to fully grasp the game's much talked about comb(o)at system, this investigative journalist finally revelled in the reality of the buzzwords that followed the unveiling of *PoP2* at E3 with a variety of satisfying attack and counter combinations, each more gratifying than the last. The input system built off of every action allows for a grand number of battle movements, it also means action in the game will never really become an exercise in

JUST CAN'T LET GO

Prince of Persia 2's free-form fighting system allows for much engagement, including the use of grabs. From this position the Prince is free to choose whether to break the victim's back, decapitate him, disembowel him, steal his weapon or our personal favourite, choke him to death. He can also throw the victim or launch himself from the hold while throwing the enemy – there's definitely much to decide in the split seconds like this.

A BRIDGE NOT TOO FAR

After our hero takes care of the mob around him, a quick leap across the way will ensure he makes it to this walk way, here, depending on your approach, you can sneak up on another guard, or take him head on, either way our recommendation would be to throw him over the side.

SNEAKY PRINCES

It is also now possible to sneak up on unsuspecting guards, in fact our Prince scaled these heights and hopped over this barrier to surprise his unsuspecting victim, this way, you can get the drop on enemies early and subject them to holds like this.

SPRING BOARD

Another manoeuvre available to the Prince would be to lead his captor towards the wall where he can decapitate his enemy and then lunge, in the blink of an eye, at one of the others, splitting them in two! You can also throw the bad guy against the wall or simply spring off of it to give yourself some distance.

WALL HUGGER

Surrounded? Use your surroundings...

As well as the countless combos and variations in armed and unarmed combat at the Prince's disposal, he can incorporate his surroundings into his actions, sometimes to devastating effect.

At various points in play you'll come across certain pieces of the environment that can be interacted with on a deeper level than it may at first seem. Who needs weapons when the walls around you are ready allies in combat?

Spinning around the beam with sword outstretched = 'Decapinated'

Deadly spike traps that are a *PoP* trademark, and not always unwelcome...

They won't see you coming along the path if you dont... Well, come along it!

tediousness like it became in the first. Ubisoft has approached the concerns that confining battles to specific areas of the game map segregated gameplay too much - now, you'll encounter the evil hordes that make up the bad-guy cast in the second game anywhere, anytime. Utilising this 'battle-anywhere' design with the game's ramped up combat, Ubisoft Montreal has viscerally changed the game's approach, making it a much more engaging experience for the hardcore gamer who found the act of finishing *Sands of Time* to be a bit of a hollow victory.

As well as changing the combat system and enemy encounters, our heroic developers have approached the game's environments with a desire to tighten narrative, specifically on a visual level. If a picture is worth a thousand words, the book that is *PoP2* leads players through a darker and more mature game, while scripted themes and certain characters maintain a level of ripeness *Sands of Time* seemed to only hint at. This time around,

A darker and more mature game...

the game begins aboard a Persian vessel charging through a roaring sea, our protagonist, one Prince of Persia, leads a grand army; proud and sure. That is, until a ship of death assails upon them and it's business as usual, with the Prince taking on the undead scourge around him. Explosions lead the player to the ship's hull, where specific areas of the environment will help you learn and understand some of the context sensitive battle manoeuvres available to our young hero. Eventually the worst case scenario unfolds, and the Prince is washed ashore on a mysterious island where his adventure truly begins. It is here players will no doubt feel the most comfortable, as the game reminds us of the solitary experience of *the Sands of Time* as you feel your way around the map with naught but a few birds to take care of.

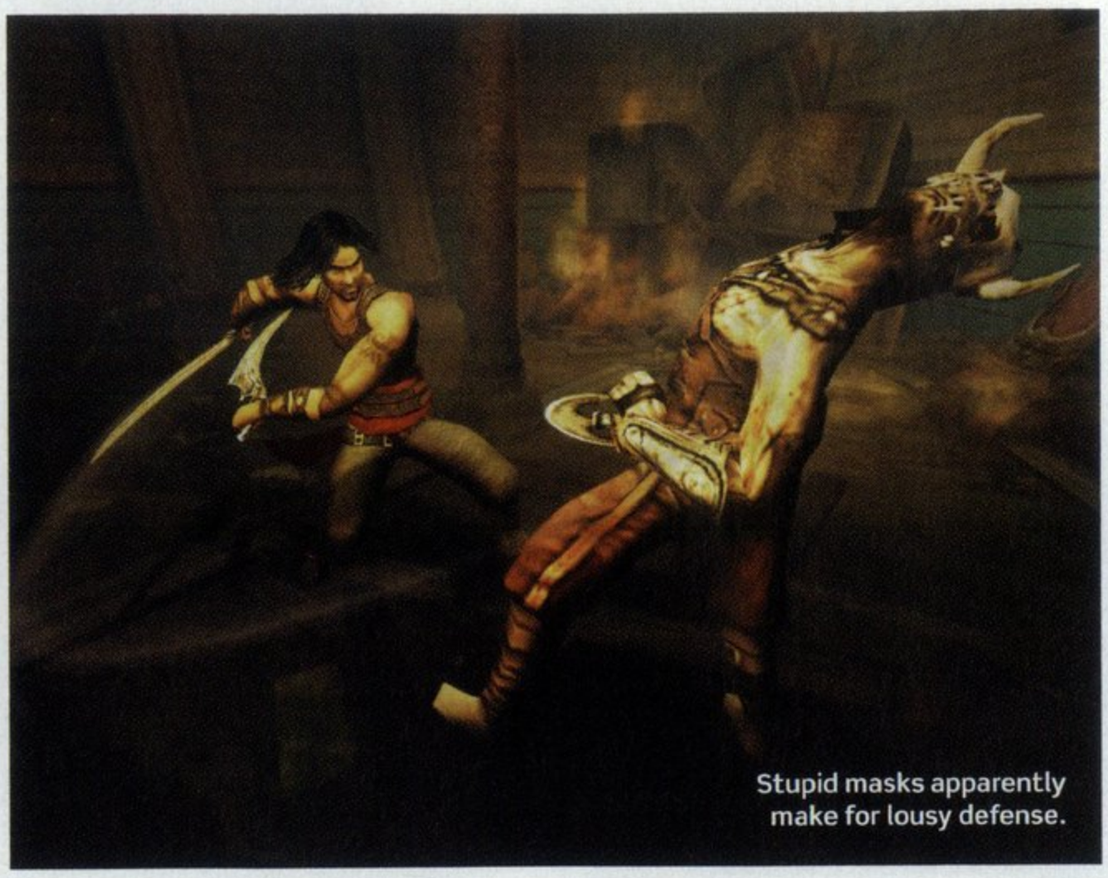
As we traversed the island and made our way into the huge fortress upon it, we realised the game hadn't needed to load at all – it's a goal for Ubisoft Montreal to have the game roll out without any interruptions, specifically

PRINCE OF PERSIA 2

INTRODUCING

The girls...

The Prince only had Farah as a female balance point in the previous game – this time, however, the Prince will come across a number of ladies, each with their own part to play in the grand story, and at times meeting these girls can prove very, very dangerous for our hero. The first cab off the rank will be Shadhee (pictured), the Prince will meet her aboard his ship where they'll have a duel amidst a shower of rain and chaos (remember, his ship is falling apart). If you manage to beat her, don't bank on it being the only time you see her again, this girl is like a bad penny, she always turns up.



Stupid masks apparently make for lousy defense.

interruptions that remind the player they're sitting in front of the monitor. It's important for the suspension of disbelief and equally important for the immersion of the player; Ubisoft Montreal desperately wants the feel of the game to remain very story-book like, and the revamped art alongside the aforementioned goal both go along way to achieving this.

Taking great pains to design a darker game, *PoP2's* art-direction mimics old death-metal album covers from the '80s and combines this imagery with a ubiquitous air of catharsis brought about through a stony soundtrack, dim dynamic lighting, huge gothic environments and a solid engine that pulls it all together. Indeed, the Prince has never looked so good, and he'll need all the heroic characteristics he gained in *the Sands of Time* to face what's in front of him.

The story for *Prince of Persia 2* has also received a well-deserved makeover, and while we don't dislike what transpired in *the Sands of Time*, we're not complaining that *PoP2* has approached plot and narrative with a genuinely more active and involved premise.

Due to the events of the first game being undone, our old friend 'Fate' has taken on physical form in the immortal sense to seek retribution on our protagonist. Known only as Dahaka, this twisted entity needs to set things right, and the biggest wrong at the moment is that our Prince is still alive – rewinding time and thwarting death in *the Sands of Time* spawned this incarnation of death, and Dahaka will do anything to put the Prince in the grave he managed to escape from. According to Ubisoft Montreal, being hunted by fate itself has changed the Prince into something of an edgy, dangerous man; a man who will throw himself headfirst into danger with no regard for his own well-being. However, such reckless behaviour has boosted his self belief and as such, his skill level has risen to meet this mental stature and this will conveyed in the game through the Prince's body language, abrasiveness and the way he embraces brutality when dealing with his foes.

Mimics old death metal album covers...

While the first game really only included a cast of three - the Prince, Farah and the Grand Vizier, to run with the idea of expanding every aspect of the series, Ubisoft has introduced several characters to *Prince of Persia 2* who will play an important role in the seesaw that is our protagonist's life.

Some of these characters are very nasty and will make several memorable appearences throughout the game as sub-bosses, while others, who we will simply meet once, act as bigger

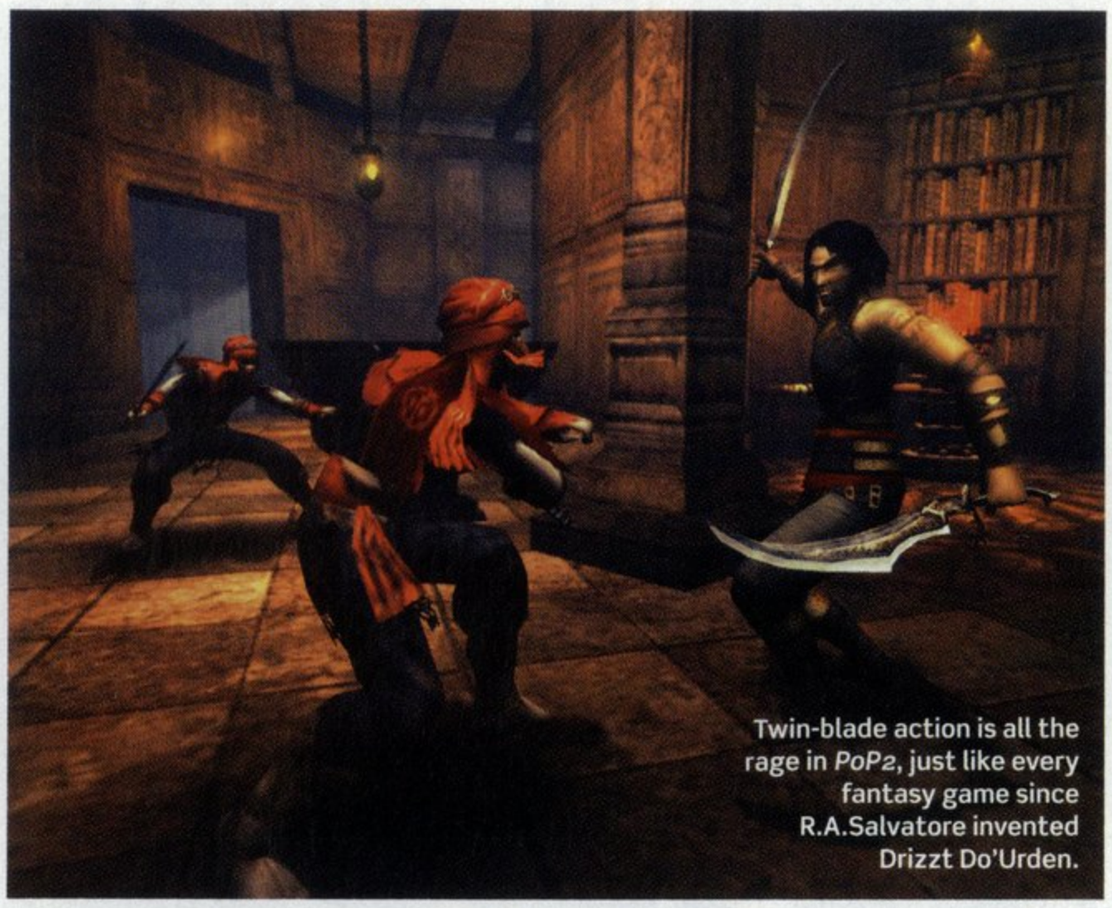
LOW LIGHTING

Delving deep into the darkness...

As mentioned, the designers have tried to thicken the atmosphere for players with a much darker world. One that's a little more believable through the inception of the new plot. Environments, specifically, have been truly unlit; revealing a more cathartic world, darker in character and stonier in atmosphere.

The first two images are pieces of concept art, with the last image showing how the previous piece of art ends up looking within the game.

The bigger they are, the longer they take to climb...



Twin-blade action is all the rage in *PoP2*, just like every fantasy game since R.A.Salvatore invented Drizzt Do'Urden.

more rewarding bosses. Naturally, defeating them will have a resounding impact on the course of events. It's not a unique system, but it works well with the changes to gameplay and also extends the life of the Prince by (dare I say it, again?) leaps and bounds (I think you just did - *Ed*).

Everything we were privy to in Montreal really gave us a warm glow of anticipation; the *Prince of Persia* series is fast becoming the adventure game we've been screaming out for, but nobody was delivering. The no-frills approach to gameplay helps establish a boundless world with plenty of room growth. *PoP2* has proven this idea with its revamped battle system, the changes to art-direction, the expansion of story and the sheer flow of every moment you're playing. And while Ubisoft tells us what we saw barely scratches the surface, we're already hooked enough to put our money down for the earliest possible copy of the final game this November.

No-frills approach to gameplay...

PoP2 is the perfect evolution of an already brilliant game and if what we've seen only scratches the surface, we can't wait to hack away the exterior to get all gaming goodness that lies within. Thanks to Ubisoft Montreal's creativity – no longer will the Prince lay beneath the sands of time, as he once again actively takes a part in making gaming history in new, exciting ways, instead of just championing old gaming ideals.

STEPHEN FARRELLY

READ ME

Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Ubisoft Montreal
Web www.princeofpersiagame.com
Exhilaratingly fun to play, wistful in idea yet bold in statement, *PoP2* is cut above the rest.

As you can see from the variety of sword swipes shown, the Prince now dishes it out in a manner that suits the situation.

Based in Canberra? Sounds Irrational to us...

Tribes: Vengeance

"No, they're not space age Floaties you gimbo!"

THE PITCH
Swift and expansive FPS battles on vast maps, with cool guns, tanks and jetpacks.

No prizes for spotting the heavy armour model here.

PCGA recently had a chance to catch up with Ben Lee, lead designer on *Tribes: Vengeance*. Now nearing completion, this FPS is bright, colourful, and looks like nothing else on the market. This is no accident; Ben and his team strove from the beginning to make a fresh-take on the genre.

"I've noticed a lot of games recently have a tendency to be a bit samey looking. What I'd call a bit drab. Tom Clancy style webbing, black outfits on everyone… and there's nothing really wrong with it. But when Vivendi came to us to do *Tribes* they specifically requested that we do something different. They didn't want just another carbon copy of *Tribes*."

Working from the source material of *Tribes I* & *II*, the natural choice would be to produce more of the same. But Ben wasn't having any of it. "That falls into the trap of looking like everything else; super, super, super slick sci-fi. We had to come up with something that would look better. Visually better and more detailed than older games, but at the same time it had to precede *Tribes*."

So what was their secret?

"We tried to imagine everything had petrol in it, instead of magical nuclear energy, or whatever it is that powers Star-Treky blue glowy stuff. There's no blue glowy stuff as far as we could push it."

Fuel tanks, flaming exhaust… visceral cues to lend to a believable game.

Visceral cues to lend to a believable game...

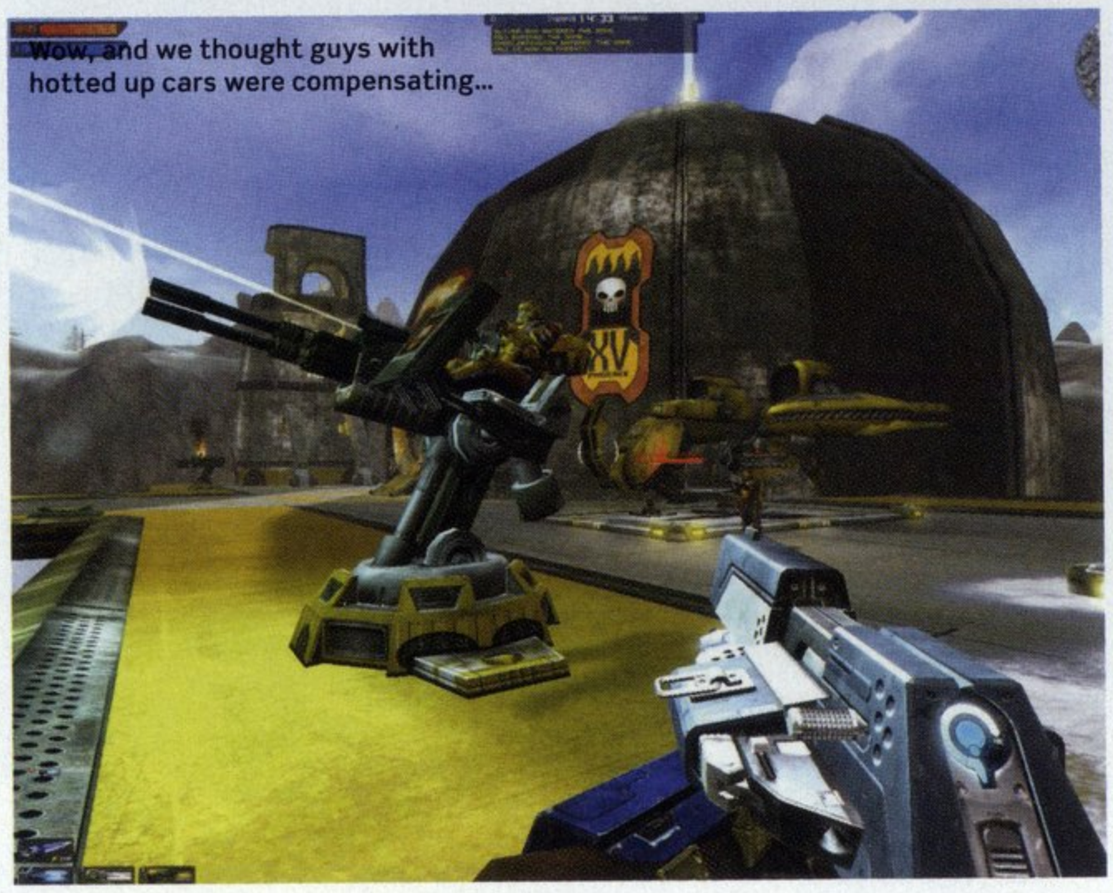
"On top of that, we were trying to make the three tribes to look truly different from one another. Not just three skinned versions of the one model."

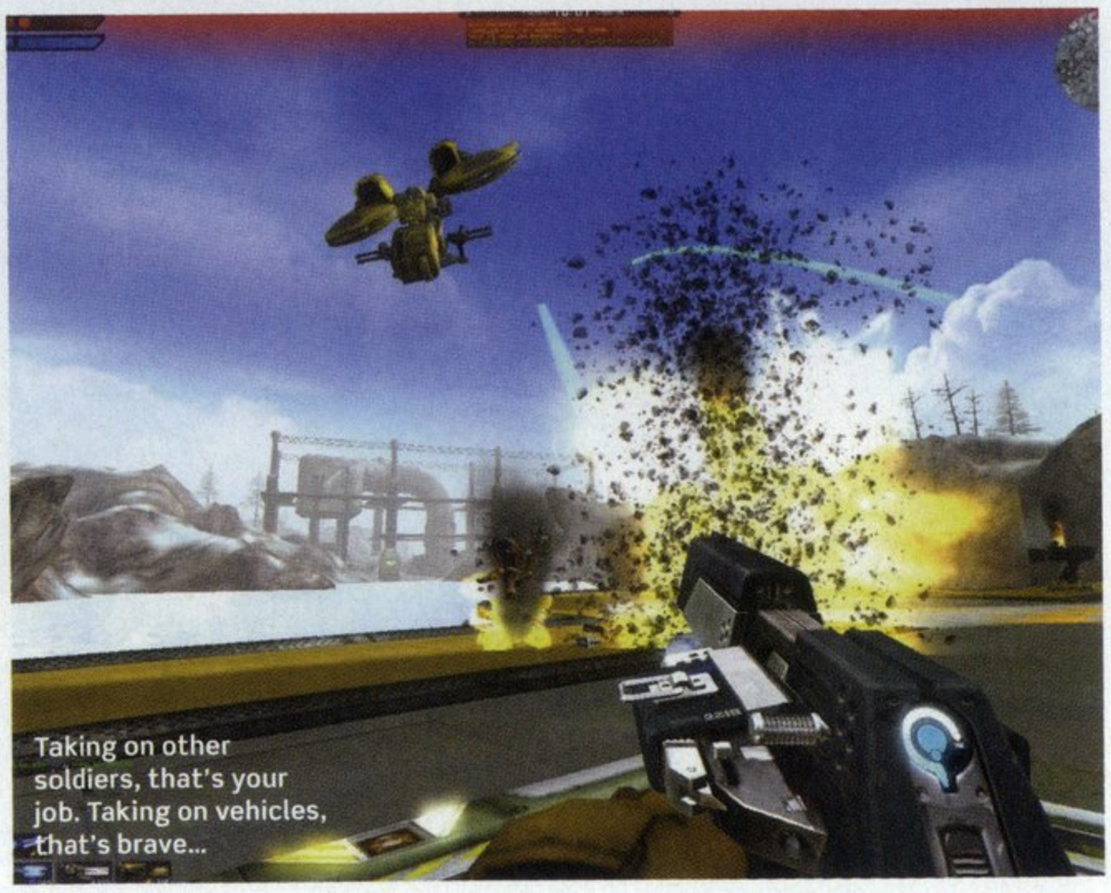
The colour schemes are bold; they virtually burst out of your screen. All that colour's in there for a reason.

"One the problems with *Tribes* is that its played at such great distances a lot of the time – the maps are very big, so that your enemies are little specks. I wanted to cram as much colour differentiation into the three tribes as possible."

The weapons also proved to be innovative and distinctive in equal measure.

"They're are a mix of standby Tribes weapons like the Spin Fuser. Any Tribes fan will tell you it has to have a Spin Fuser in it to be a *Tribes* game. So, we've got a Spin Fuser in it, but it's got a huge latch on it, you can see all the gas


Wow, and we thought guys with hotted up cars were compensating...


Taking on other soldiers, that's your job. Taking on vehicles, that's brave...

THE VEHICLES
Tanks, moon buggies, hovercraft and gunshisp: all are at your disposal in Vengeance. They command amazing firepower, but they don't make you invulnerable. Far from it - you're a bigger target when in a tin can!
THE JETPACKS
This is what Tribes is all about: Flying around like a lunatic and smiting your enemies. Or, if you prefer, skating along the ground and doing the same thing. It's your call
THE MAP
Colour-coded blobs help you tell friend from fiend - a necessity in a truly three-dimensional battlefield.
THE OPEN RANGE
Maps are vast in Tribes, Vengeance. Even with 32 people tooling around, there's plenty of room to try out tactics, mass your troops, get lost, run and hide, or whatever takes you fancy.
THE GATS
Mechanical realism is everywhere in Vengeance, and it really give the game an extra visceral "oomph." That latch on the gun bounces up and down as you run, by the way. Nice.

eject when it reloads, instead of just buzzing and clicking.

"The chain gun originally had a big chainsaw ripcord pull you had to do to start it, which involved a spin up time which keeps getting tweaked, so at the moment that's actually out, but the art team's very keen to get that back in. That's our favourite bit of animation on the weapons."

It's clear already that this is a distinctly Australian game.

"It's a V8 game. It's not a poncy electronic game, it's a fuel-injected diesel-powered game."

When discussion shifted to this internal-combustion futurism Ben got visibly excited.

"Any time the designers wanted to put something in that was glowy or floaty, I'd get really angry. 'No, I want a big cog, and a piston! And I want grease shooting out!!'"

Tribes is synonymous with team-based multi-player, and the new modes will accommodate players of all skill levels.

"Fuel is becoming a bit of a favourite among the design team. I like it, because I'm not very good at capture the flag, I like playing Fuel because I don't have to be good at flying incredibly quickly and nabbing stuff, it can be a bit more sneaky."

So the multi-player heritage of Tribes has certainly been covered, but the single player mode is no token feature. Not only is it an extended, fully-fledged campaign, but you get to see this epic galactic conflict from every side.

And like the aforementioned epics, monarchy has returned as the dominant government.

"Monarchy is back, but it's not very nice. It's an unpleasant sort of monarchy, if you're not in the monarchy. If you're in the monarchy, it's fantastic."

This left open the question of how far future society had regressed. Are things going backwards, like in *Dune*?

"We didn't concentrate very much on distinct things like technology, or how they travel. All that stuff's kind of up in the air. The story's really driven by the characters. It's about the personalities, the people who are involved. So… I dunno. Maybe!"

So, the single player game looks like fun. But how long will it take to play through?

"It depends on how good you are, unfortunately. Everyone always says that, but it's true! If you're one of the designers, probably not very long. I don't know how long it takes them to play it. There's about 18 missions, and you could spend at least an hour playing each one. It's not like it's a secondary, small single player game. It's a standard single player first person shooter, with the added benefit of getting a multi-player game as well."

Finally, we asked Ben what it was like working in Canberra. He had some colourful things to say off the record, but didn't want to his comments appearing in print.

"I can't say that. The government will get me!"

JAMES COTTEE

README

Publisher Vivendi
Developer Irrational Games
Link www.irrationalgames.com
Home-grown *Tribes*, looking far more promising and feature-filled than ever before.

UT2004's Onslaught mode has some serious competition.

HIGH CHAIR

In *Top Spin*, all the referees speak not in English but their native language – a clear sign that videogames will eventually replace Linguaphone. And school.

BONCE BOUNCE

The ball boys aren't animated, but they are physical objects within the world. That means you can devise emergent subgames with a partner – like seeing if you can bounce the ball off them with a forehand smash.

FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH...

Tennis is a global phenomenon, played in street courts, leisure centres and grand stadiums the world over. Of course, our Ed Dan notes that he's lived not too far from the Opera House for but can't for the life of him recall the courts floating off to the side.

New balls please

Top Spin

RELEASE NOVEMBER

You're watching the post-match analysis: videogames have just defeated real-world sports in a thrilling centre-court match, claiming the Wimbledon championship. Karryn Pratt leads the discussion. "Well, it came down to the wire, but *Top Spin* had the edge in the end. John Newcomb – what impressed you about this tennis newcomer?"

"For me, the depth of control *Top Spin* offered even beginner players was astonishing. It took me four or five years to master the basic shots but *Top Spin* lets you bounce balls around the court within a couple of minutes. From then on in, it's less about knocking the ball over the net and more about tactical shot selection, picking your corner and charging to the front of the court."

THE PITCH

Top Spin is a tennis *simulation*, rather than a tennis *game*. *Pong* has finally grown up.

"You're right, of course," interjects Tony Trabert, "but I'd argue that the range of *Top Spin*'s game is its greatest strength. It's like a racquet RPG – you train your player up, adding special moves, more powerful backhands. When you're ready, you can take your alter-ego online, knocking balls about the world wide web court. There's even online rankings and leagues, for players better than me."

"How civilised of you, John," replies Fred Stolle. "But, something else strikes me. *Top Spin* manages your success. Play well, and you build up something called 'In The Zone'. It's marked as a glowing bar at the top of the screen. Fill it, and your character will play out of his skin, skimming just inside the white lines. You'll also find it easier to complete the risk shots; drop shots and smashes that are bound to the triggers. To get those in, you'll need to time how long you hold the button down. Get them right and they'll win you the match."

"I have to say that he's not a bad looking player by any stretch of the imagination," coos Liz Smilie. "We were all impressed with his early performances on the Xbox circuit, but he's coped remarkably well in transferring to the PC. The most noticeable difference is the increase in resolution: models and player animations are eerily lifelike. Sampras has exactly the same lovely set of pins that make me all gooey in.... mmm." Erk.

TIM EDWARDS

README

Publisher Atari
Developer Power and Magic Development
Link www.pamdev.com
This is no half-hearted rally: already *Top Spin* looks fabulous on the PC.

TENNIS MACHINE

Your opponents display a disarming degree of intelligence: if you don't play aggressively, they'll push forward into the net. That's the cue to hammer the lob button.

SUPER GRASS

The surface of the court has an enormous effect on your playing style. Dirt courts can be a nightmare if you don't plan your shots – your momentum will force you to skid a couple of inches each time you change direction. Not fun when you're chasing baseline returns.

CUSTOM DEFINED PLAYER

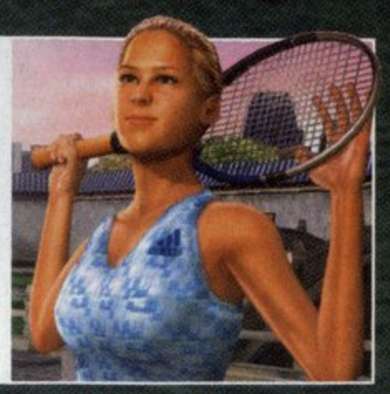
Born A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.
Highs The character creation tool within *Top Spin* is a mini-game in itself. Every detail can be altered.
Lows It takes more than a little skill to craft something that doesn't look like it landed in Area 51 and now walks among us.

PETE SAMPRAS

Born 1971
Highs Holds the record for the most tournaments won by a tennis player, with 11 Grand Slam victories. Has been on the cover of Time magazine.
Lows Is retired. Uses the nickname 'The King of Swing.'

ANNA KOURNIKOVA

Born 1981
Highs Grand Slam doubles title with Martina Hingis, wooing the male 'fashion' press with pictures of her bottom.
Lows Getting hitched to that cad Enrique Iglesias. We still mourn, you know.

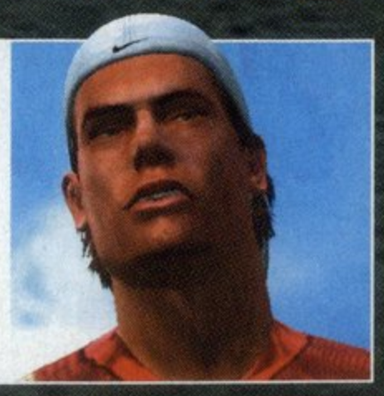


MARTINA HINGIS

Born 1980
Highs Named after Martina Navratilova. Superstitious. Believes walking on the white lines of the court is unlucky.
Lows Pursued court case against footwear company, alleging their shoes hurt her feet.

LLEYTON HEWITT

Born 1981
Highs REALLY knows how to annunciate the words "Come on!". Won the Wimbledon title in 2002. Has time to become endearing...
Lows Kim Cljisters - Princess Fiona's uglier stunt double.



Say it loud, say it proud: "Zug-zug"

World of Warcraft

RELEASE NOVEMBER

Wearing green skin is not easy. Since the *WoW* beta began, the vast majority of players have sided with the Alliance – the goodies. It's an increasing point of contention that few players are willing to adopt the olive hide and amusing jaw-line of the Horde. Why forgo the the orcs, the trolls, the taurens and the undead?

The reasons are fictional and functional. First of all, there's a certain stigma attached to Horde players. In the RTS games, orcs have always been a beaten, downtrodden race. Since *Warcraft II*, the Horde have been forced to live on reservations, scratching out an existence on the dusty 'Barrens'. To play as an orc or troll is to play the underclass.

Secondly – trolls are ugly. So are orcs. The undead are grim. Only the taurens, with their bullish, flowing locks and twin horns have a sense of style. This is hugely important: on day one, the vast majority of players will decide their race according to aesthetics. Blizzard are working on the problem: on a recent visit to their Orange County studio the designers we met were at great pains to emphasise their work in redrafting the races. They face daily questions like: how goodlooking can an orc get? Does an undead guy need both ears on a date? And, what makes a troll sexy? (Answer: long, flowing locks, bright blue eyes, and a nice firm pair of... teeth.)

Does an undead guy need both ears on a date?

Consider this a recruitment drive. Players who opt for an Alliance character are missing out. Playing as the Horde is also tremendously entertaining. The Barrens is a hugely atmospheric area. It's essentially a desert, crawling with scorpions, snakes, and vile imps. The orcish encampments – from the tiny shantytown of the Den, to the small town of Durotar, near your starting location – are little more than seas of grey-brown tents that have been left out for decades too long in the sun. Even the great city of Ogrimar looks like a rock festival campsite that overstayed its welcome.

ON THE DVD You can't play it yet, but you can gawk, drool and pine for November with this trailer > Movies.

Outside, the difference between the races really shows up. Entering the fray with a mixed horde group is glorious: while there's no real difference between racial abilities, other than their look, players create the style, bringing their own ideas of how an undead should approach combat – complete with shambolic dance moves and raucous celebrations.

And killing is what the Horde were built for. In the last beta patch, a PvP realm was trialed. For the first time, the Horde and the Alliance are actively encouraged to whip-up teams and invade the enemy's territory. By far the most contested area right now is Booty Bay. The only place in the entire game with a neutral auction house, where rare items can be traded between factions, it's become fight-club central. Long may the faction wars continue.

TIM EDWARDS

README

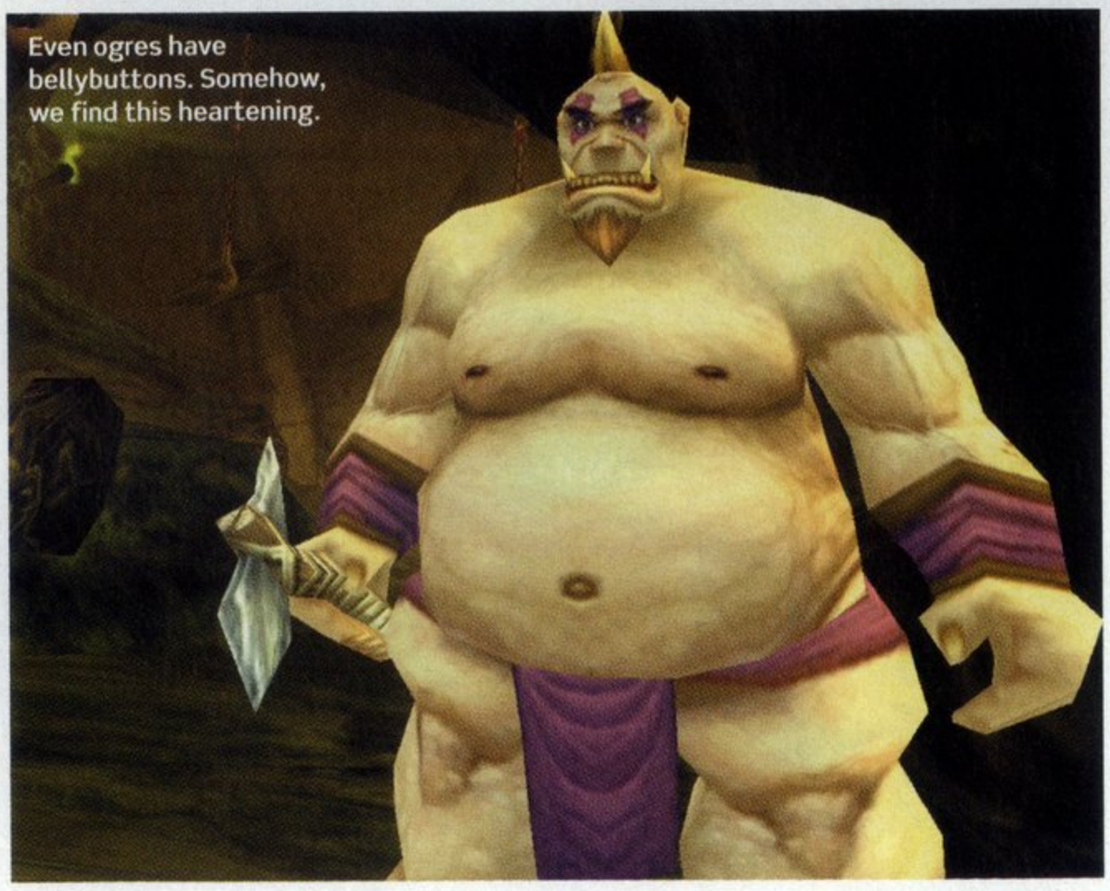
Publisher Vivendi
Developer Blizzard
Link www.worldofwarcraft.com
A multi-faceted, complex MMO. We're already in love.

The hunter class allows you to train the wildlife, like these feral rams, as pets and mounts.

BUILD YOUR OWN

Character customisation in *World of Warcraft* is simple enough. The real question is, can you find a suitable beard and hair combination to suit your penchant for running elves through with a giant, two-handed sword?

Parties are made up of up to six players. Search for a variety of classes to adventure with.



Even ogres have bellybuttons. Somehow, we find this heartening.

OFF THE SCALE

Mounts are now available for the first time in *World of Warcraft*. This is the race-specific Troll Raptor. Purchasing a mount is enormously expensive – not only do they require laying down a huge lump sum, you must also invest a thousand skill points. Mounts are therefore status symbols – the fantasy equivalent of a Mercedes – as well as transport.

THE PITCH

Orc vs human race relations. An entire world in which to act out your fantasy fantasies.

CHAIN GANG

The complete set of chainmail armour on this troll signifies a warrior class. When he steps down off his mount, he'll be wielding melee weapons, rather than casting aggressive magic. Stay away.

The Griffon is the *World of Warcraft* equivalent of a taxi, carrying you across the land at speed.

The undead horse comes with flaming hooves. Triple-winged spoiler and neon floodlights optional.

Carry on screaming

Rollercoaster Tycoon 3

RELEASE NOVEMBER

There's going to be fireworks. No really, we've seen them. Giant, choreographed light shows backed by swooping scores of classical music, pyrotechnic fountains poured liberally over our rides and 'coasters. As the sun goes down over our parks the crowds will gather, jaws will drop, and the tills will carry on playing sweet music well into the night.

Rollercoaster Tycoon 3's firework displays are that final drop at the end of Frontier's brilliantly-crafted ride. A ride propelled by an all-new 3D engine, that takes you on an exhilarating journey through the twists and turns of designing and managing your own theme park. As finishing touches go it's a gem. These aren't throwaway features. Instead you can create spectacular displays by choosing your own firework combos. The sequence is choreographed by placing your choices on a timeline; a fun mini-game in itself. You can spend minutes or hours putting your show together, ensuring that each soaring rocket and ear-splitting explosion fits with the classical and contemporary soundtracks included or with imported MP3s. Then, once your creative juices are drained, you must decide where the show will start, choosing a spot that will draw the crowds and constructing vantage points for your guests.

The tills play sweet music into the night

You can even set a time for your display and tailor a marketing campaign to get the punters in and cash flowing.

Sound business sense like this will come in handy at *Rollercoaster's* higher difficulty levels. The single-player campaign begins with six open parks, each completed park unlocking a new location. However the three difficulty levels – apprentice, entrepreneur and tycoon – offer their own rewards. At tycoon level you'll have a list of more demanding objectives to meet, such as scoring highly with inspectors. Success unlocks new rides, decorations and fireworks.

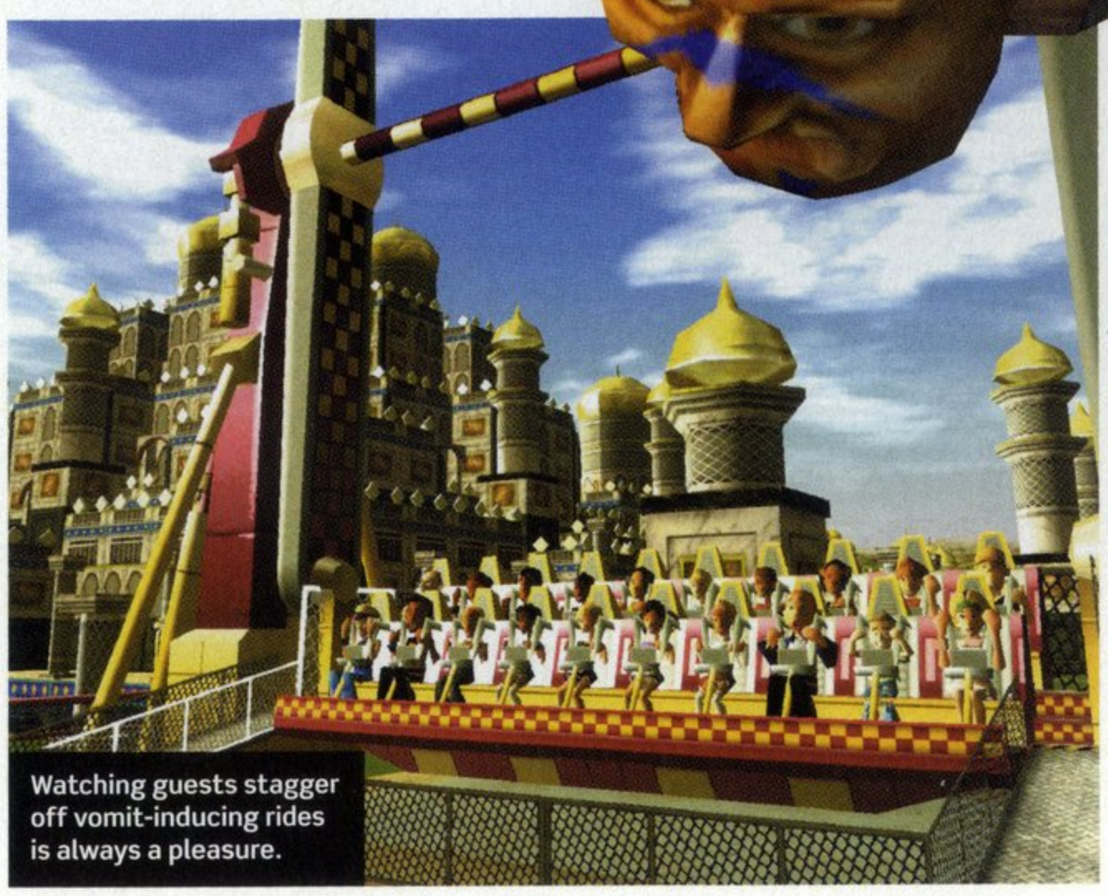
Not that you won't have enough to play with already. *Rollercoaster* boasts more rides than the previous games put together, drawing on real-world inspiration and other-world imagination to create monsters that include 95-degree drops, and 'coasters that spin you in your seat as you deathdrop at mach 3 speeds. And if Frontier have missed some of your favourites you'll be able to import rides from Chris Sawyers' isometric masterpieces into this brave new 3D world. Plus of course there's all the extra content that's going to be churned out by *Roller*'s loyal community, a following that's about to be swelled by thousands of eager pyrotechnicians.

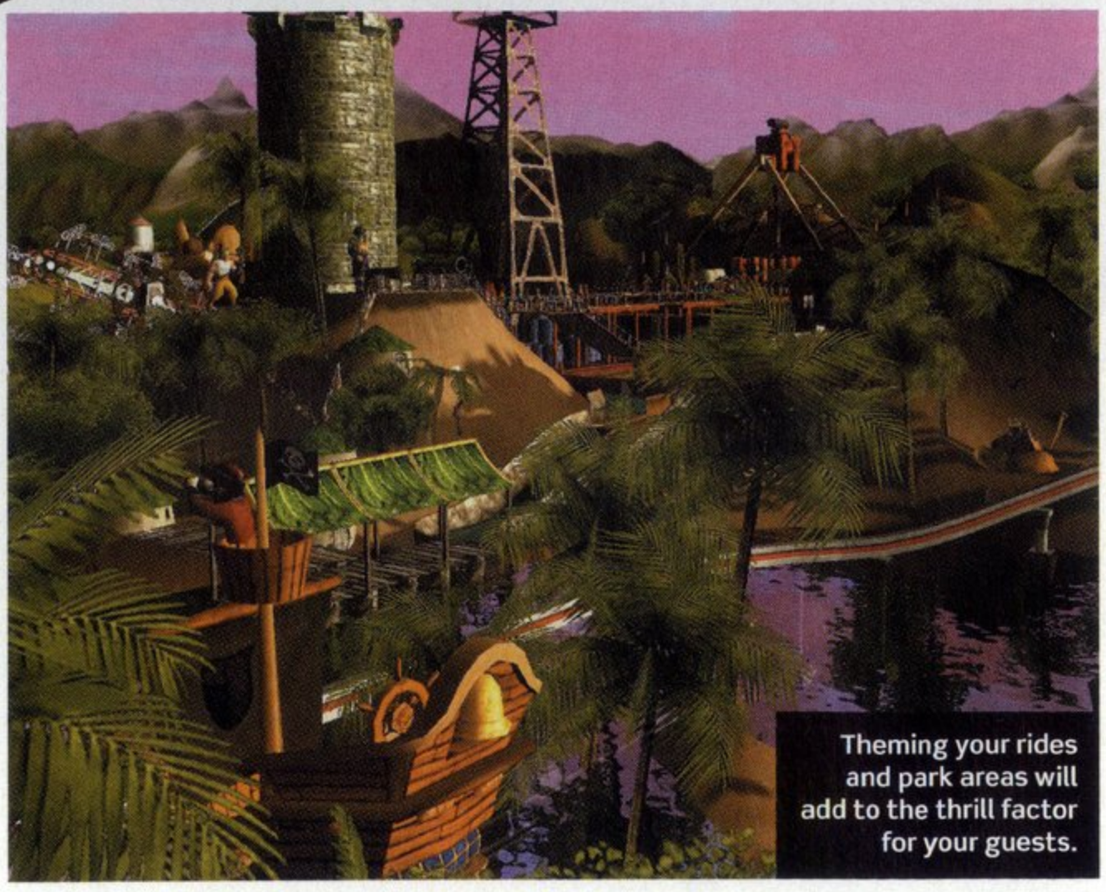
MARK SUTHERNS

THE PITCH
Transplant the 2D theme park builder to 3D. Add bigger crowds, bigger rides oh... and some big bangs.

ON THE DISC Enjoy four virtual hurl-inducing rides on different 'coasters. Pretty huh? > Movies.

The theme park inspector rules your rides. Those kids best behave.

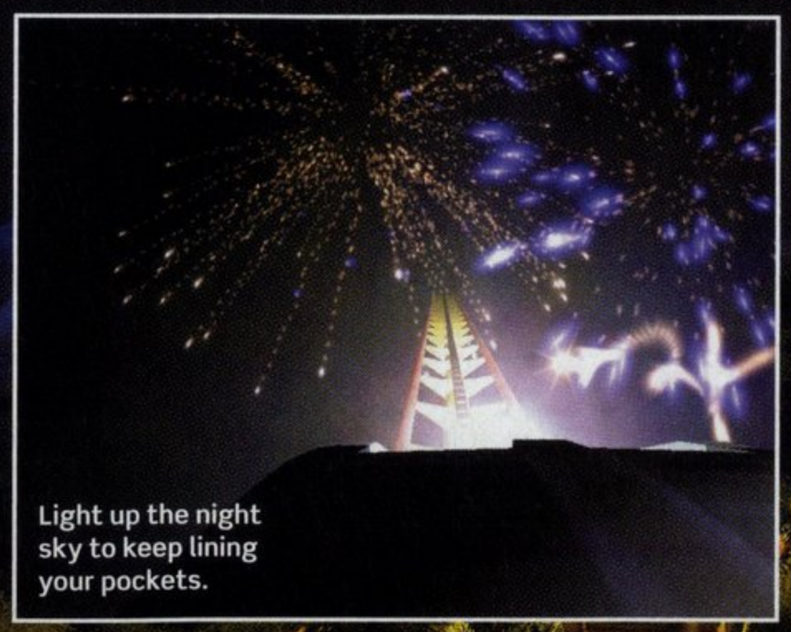

Watching guests stagger off vomit-inducing rides is always a pleasure.


Theming your rides and park areas will add to the thrill factor for your guests.

README

Publisher Atari
Developer Frontier Developments
Link www.atari.com/rollercoastertycoon
It's about to place a rocket up the rear-end of the management genre.

LAVA LOUTS
Scatter your park with animatronic scenery and you'll be able to draw guests to particular areas. Then work to improve the excitement level of nearby rides and keep the queues from open rebellion.



Light up the night sky to keep lining your pockets.

LIGHTS PLEASE
As you progress to 12-hour parks you'll need to think about lighting. Your guests will soon pack up and go home if they can't find their way around your shadowy paths.

BE MY GUEST
RCT3's editing tools enable you to create new characters from scratch and drop them into the game. You can dress them, shape them and even specify their pre-set needs before letting them loose.

Guests will check out nearby rides while waiting in line, craning their necks to take in every 'coaster loop.

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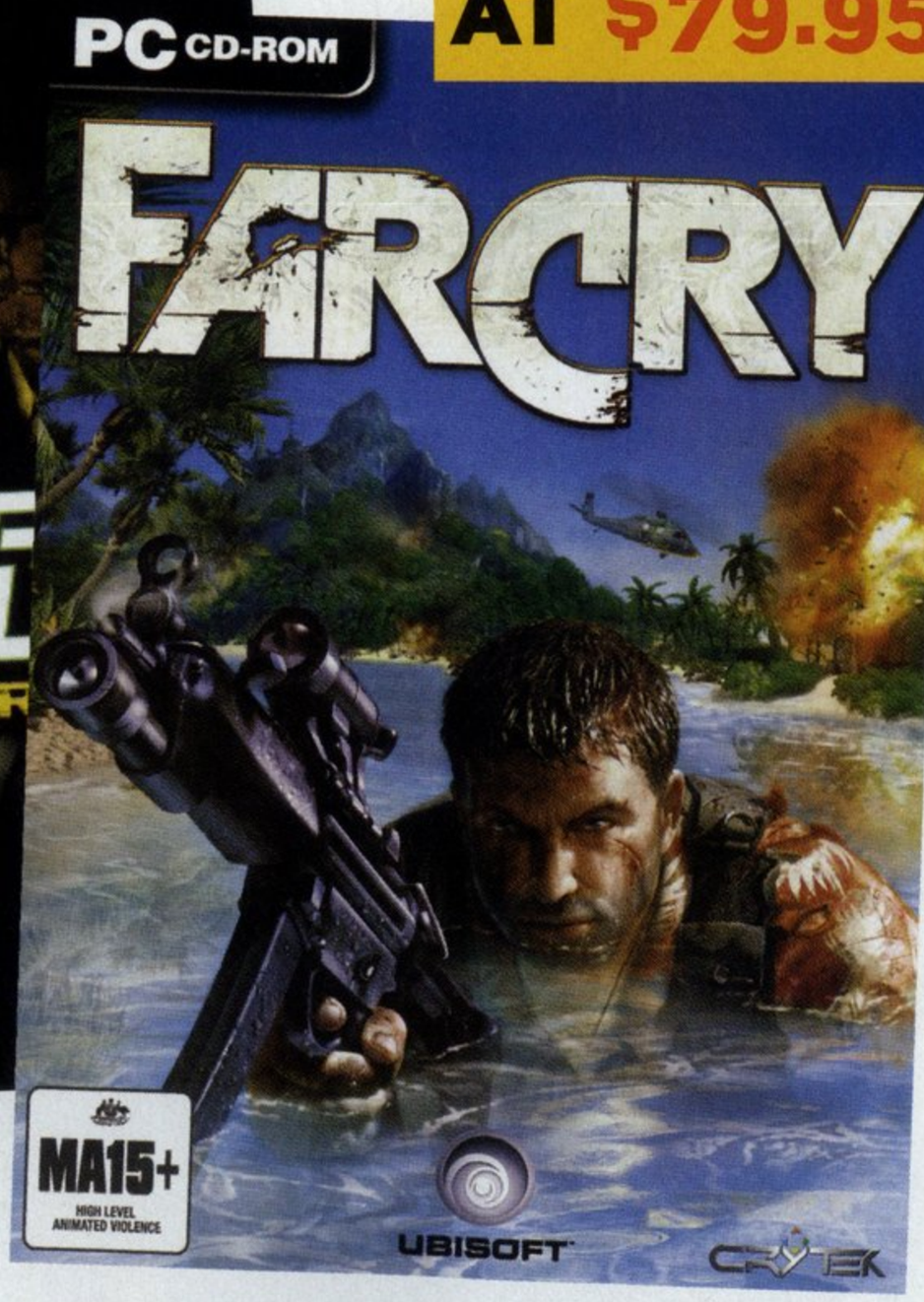

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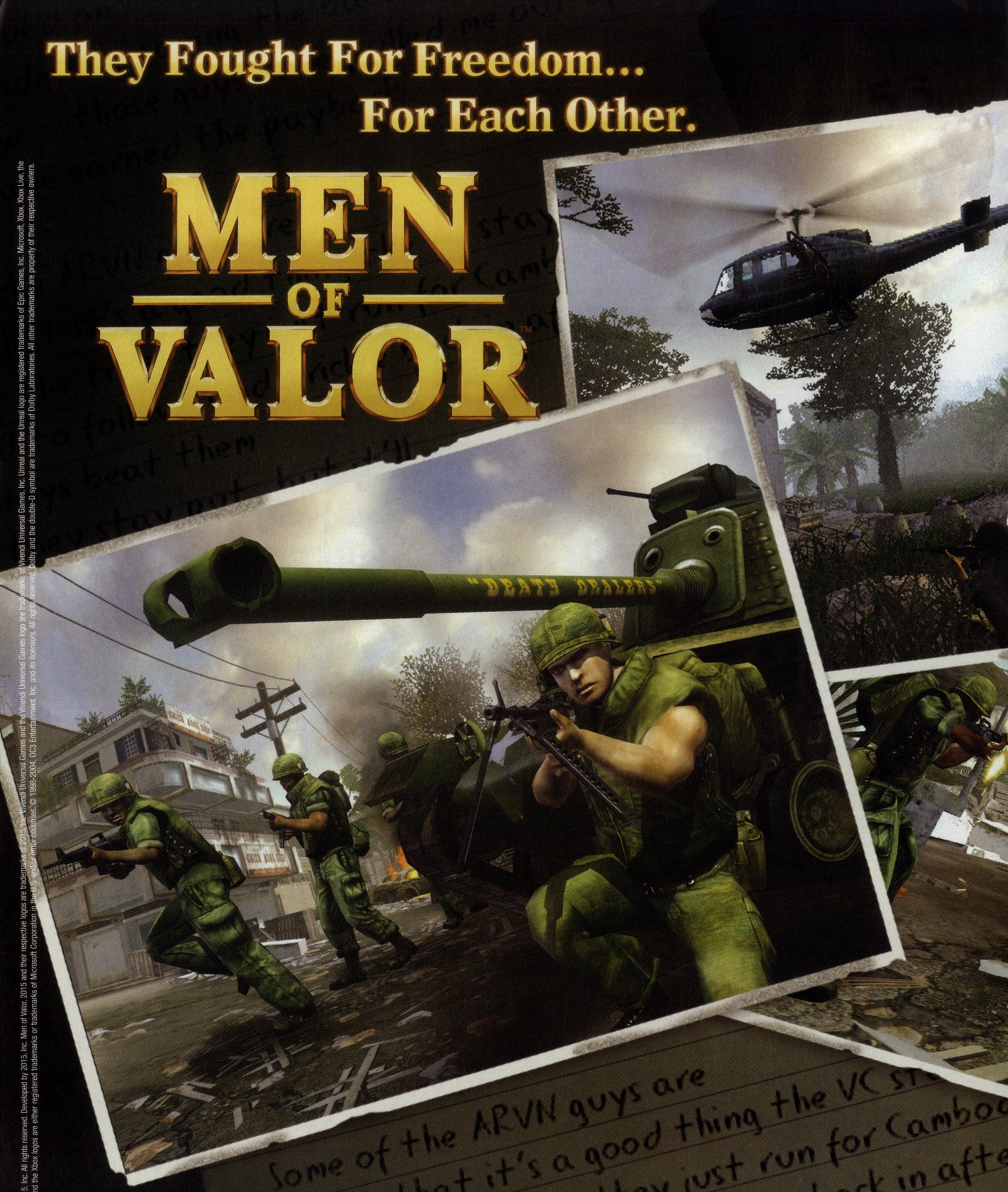

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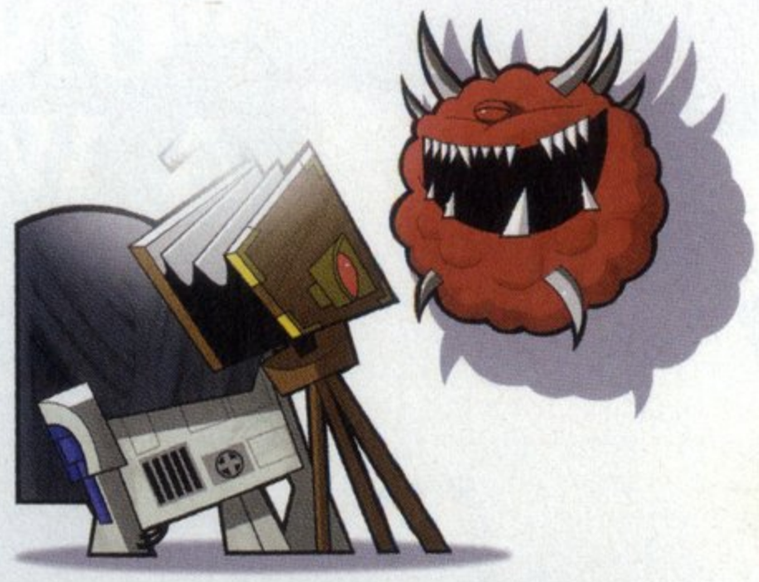
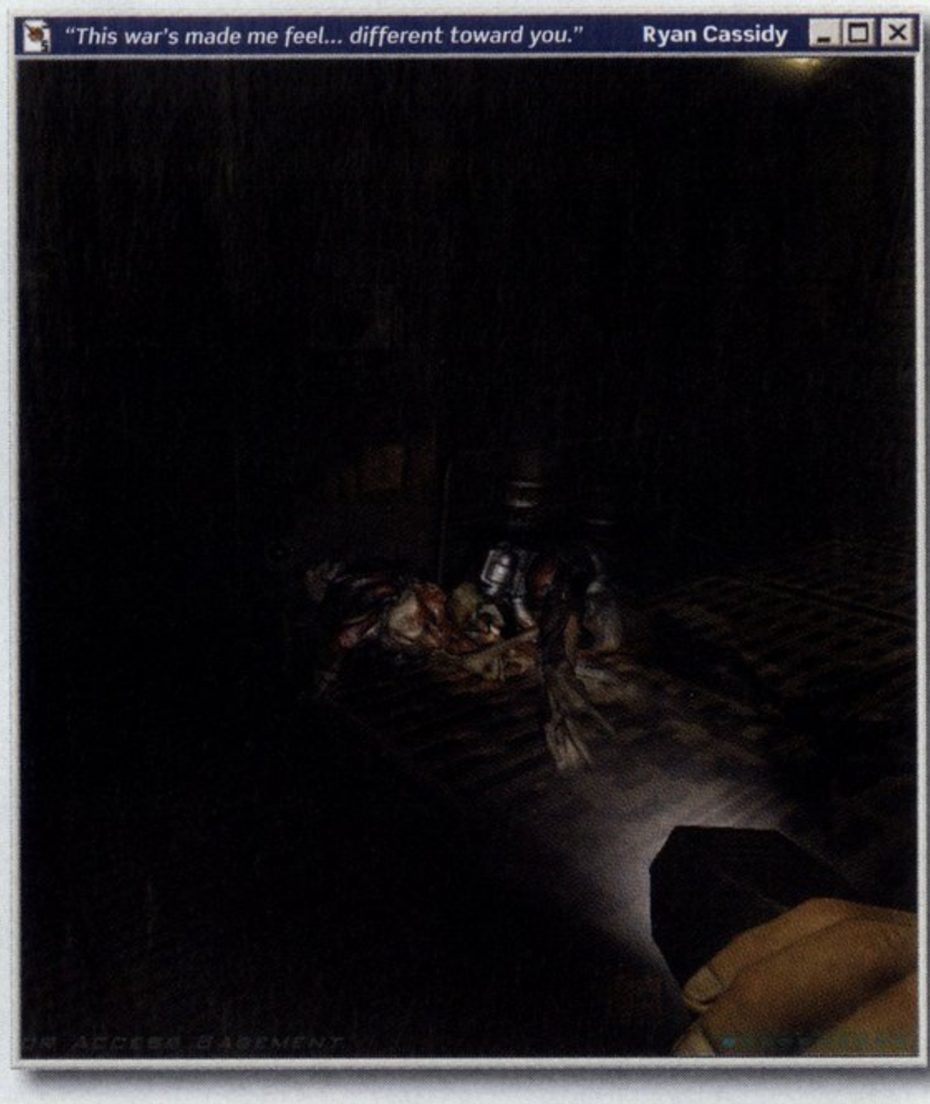


You lot have a 'gay' fixation. Nuff said...

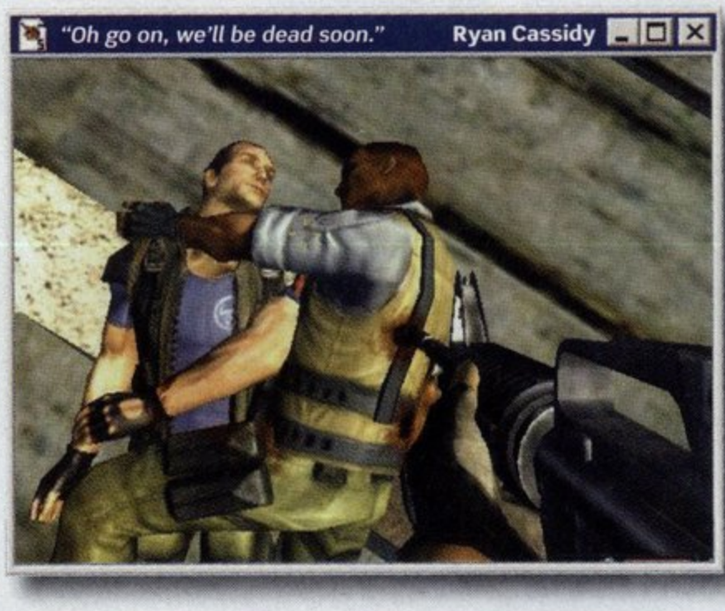
"You're grounded" **Joe Kelly**

"This war's made me feel... different toward you." **Ryan Cassidy**



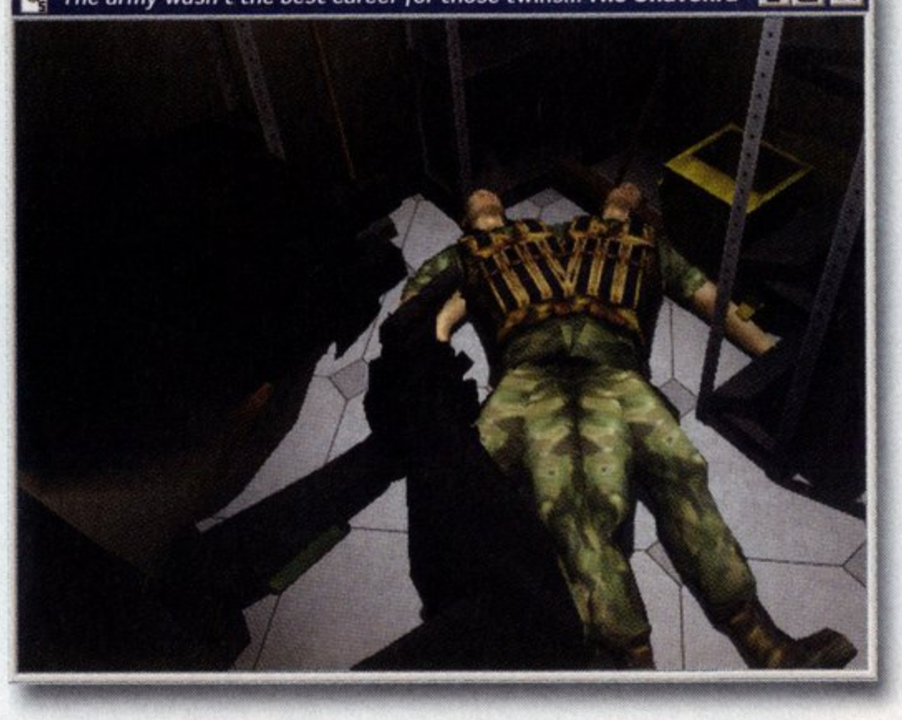
"When I said I wanted a handjo-" **Jonus Sjoqvist**

"Oh go on, we'll be dead soon." **Ryan Cassidy**

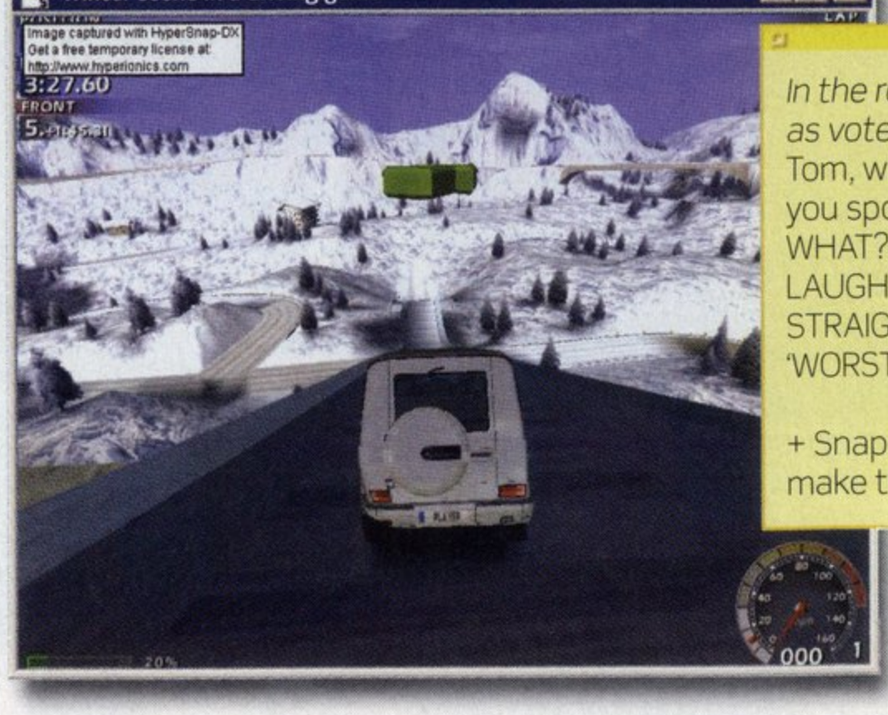


"Is this what you call love human?" **Joe Kelly**

The army wasn't the best career for those twins... **The Unavohra**



Winter scene in a driving game **Tom Weatherhead**



In the recycle bin this month, as voted by Art...
Tom, with your ramps of comedy you spoil us. WHY IS THIS FUNNY!? WHAT? LOOK AT IT! DID YOU LAUGH? YOU HAVE 'JUMPED' STRAIGHT TO NUMBER ONE IN OUR 'WORST SNAPS EVER' POLL!

+ Snap tip... Short captions help make the cut so to speak.

CREATIVE

Need a capture program? Use IrfanView on the cover disc! Then send your snap & caption combo to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** with "SNAP" as the subject. Funniest entry each month wins an excellent set of **Creative T770 speakers**!

Combo Cool DIY
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At Thermaltake, we are frequently asked whether this fan can be connected to that heatsink. Now we have made it easier for you. Simply select a heatsink and a fan from the list below to design your own Combo Cool DIY CPU Cooler

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UFO#2	UFO#2 + GOLF325	UFO#2 + GOLF325	UFO#2 + PIPE101	UFO#2 + TOWER102	UFO#2 + TOWER112
UFO#3	UFO#3 + Hammer525	UFO#3 + Hammer525	UFO#3 + PIPE101	UFO#3 + TOWER102	UFO#3 + TOWER112
XBPRO#1	XBPRO#1 + GOLF325	XBPRO#1 + GOLF325	XBPRO#1 + PIPE101	XBPRO#1 + TOWER102	XBPRO#1 + TOWER112
XBPRO#2	XBPRO#2 + GOLF325	XBPRO#2 + GOLF325	XBPRO#2 + PIPE101	XBPRO#2 + TOWER102	XBPRO#2 + TOWER112
XBPRO#3	XBPRO#3 + GOLF325	XBPRO#3 + GOLF325	XBPRO#3 + PIPE101	XBPRO#3 + TOWER102	XBPRO#3 + TOWER112
Silent Cat 8CM	Silent Cat 8CM + Hammer525	Silent Cat 8CM + Hammer525	Silent Cat 8CM + PIPE101	Silent Cat 8CM + TOWER102	Silent Cat 8CM + TOWER112
Silent Cat 9CM	Silent Cat 9CM + GOLF325	Silent Cat 9CM + GOLF325	Silent Cat 9CM + PIPE101	Silent Cat 9CM + TOWER112	Silent Cat 9CM + TOWER112
Street Fighter	Street Fighter + GOLF325	Street Fighter + GOLF325	Street Fighter + PIPE101	Street Fighter + TOWER102	Street Fighter + TOWER112

* Technical specifications available from www.thermaltake.com.au
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Uncensored

Well OK, we do convert 'Typo' to English...

HALO
Reviewed by Kim Hutchinson
PCGA 17, Score 91%

There's no 'killer' in team. Or is there?

Halo multiplayer should have been an online FPS fan's wet dream. In theory, I would go so far as to say it surpasses what I expected. In practice, however, it is seriously flawed. Not because the designers failed technically or creatively, but because they failed to factor-in human nature and the dark side within. Team killing is the major cause of frustration, accidental or otherwise.

The game's flaw in design is that it lets users kill their team-mates with little or no consequences. TKers have found their home in *Halo*. Team killing is their hobby, they're devoting hours to it, wallowing in the attention it brings them. Since the game came out, I've played one or two games with normal players. But a game that enrages people so much and makes a home for such twisted miserable people is fundamentally flawed and not fun to play.

Kim's Rating 70%

PCGA *responds:* Every *game has TKers.* Halo *now includes an increased wait time when they die, as well as a ban feature if they continue to offend. Craig's lunchtimes are swallowed up with* Infinity *and* Danger Canyon CTF, *whacking Reds or Blues with impunity – any TKers taking him on will soon wish they hadn't.*

READER REVIEW OF THE MONTH

BATTLEFIELD 1942
Reviewed by Matthew Smith
PCGA 20, Score 82%

"Quick men: to the tuck shop!"

Expectation can make or brake any game. Take *Deus Ex 2*, the first was great, and the second was just as good. But read some reviews, and they bagged it completely. Expectation! *Battlefield 1942*, great game, best game of year in many magazines, but what about vietnam. With expectation so high, you are going to find people unhappy. And the fact is, both games have an identical in the way they play. Capture spawn points, kill the enemy. But lets look at the differences, which ultimatley are the improvements.

First off are the much improved graphics. Much more detail, and with recent patches, much smoother frame rates. Second, the sound is great. The '70s soundtrack in vehicles is a fantastic addition. Thirdly, and most importantly, the gameplay. The fighting is much more soldier-focused, with vehicles adding much needed support, but the intense gunfights are the heart of this game - The single biggest area of improvement.

Plus, add features like multiple team flag capture (the more soldiers, the quicker the point is taken), and maps designed for foot soldier shootouts, and you have a strong and challenging FPS. Remeber though, this is strictly multiplayer only, and only judged as such.

So does *Battlefield Vietnam* live upto the expectation of *1942*. If you were looking for something new, probably not. If you wanted a great multiplayer game, in the same vien as *1942*, only better, then its a resounding yes!

Great game, and maybe time to for *1942* to grow some dust.

Matthew's Rating 92%

PCGA *responds: Glad you enjoy it, but we find find the* BF1942 *formula to be one that still proves to be the most fun of the two games. Perhaps that's because we're tank-junkies and find tanks in* BF:V *to be less useful.*

BREED
Reviewed by Graham Reedman
PCGA 23, Score 50%

A breed apart? Or just more chum for the circling sharks? First-hand experience tells me most critics have been a little harsh towards *Breed.*

Granted: the AI (team and enemy alike) isn't up to much...run, squat, fire, roll, repeat; the plot is far from innovative; the handling of the airborne vehicles is akin to slamming your fingers in a door and trying to drive in a straight line; this game is not the sum of what it's parts should be.

Breed provides fun by the bucketload

However, *Breed* provides fun by the bucketload. And what more do we want from our games than fun and variation? One moment you might be crossing a battle-ravaged map while stationary gun emplacements bombard you from afar and Breed fighters run at you. The next you're in a flying attack vehicle picking off Breed bogeys. The next you're in a tank, destroying SAM emplacements – shortly to be followed by exo-suit stompy action in the face of yet more waves of Breed. Grab it cheap! Avoid it full price!

Graham's Rating 65%

PCGA *responds: Have it. Bring on* HL2*!*

JNC

The reader review of the month wins an awesome portable **JNC SSF-31 MP3 Player**!
Send your words to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** with "UNCENSORED" as the subject, along with your contact details. Reviews **must** be 120-200 words so we can print them!

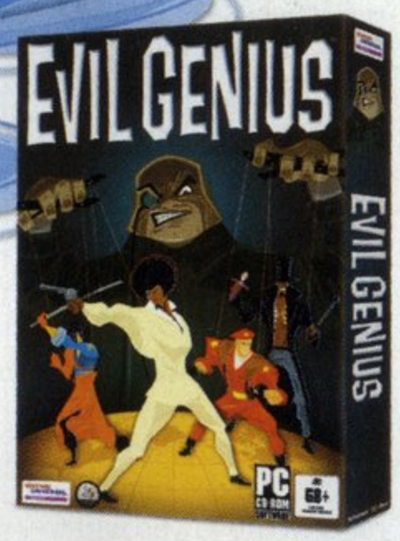
EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD

"Best of E3"
GAMESPY
(Editor's Choice - 2004)

"Best of E3"
IGN
(Most Innovative Design - 2004)

"Wicked fun! Despicable despots apply within."
PC ZONE

"Evil Genius is awesome!."
GAMES TM



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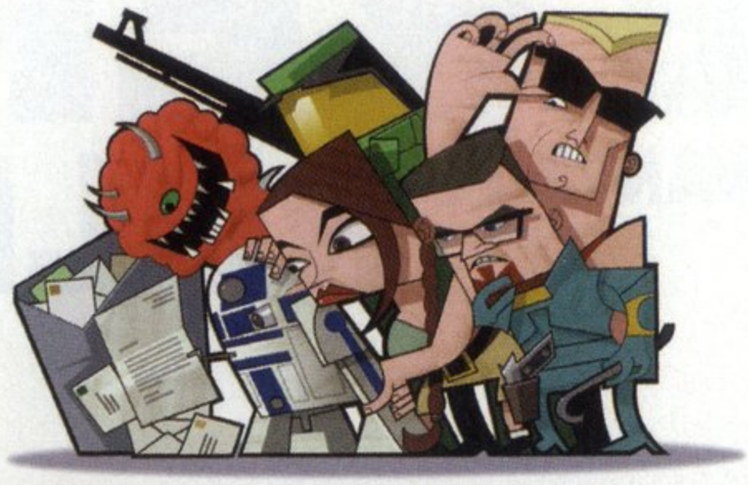


Illustrations by **David Lyttleton**

Featuring: EB getting sued, harsh scoring and stuff...

SHORTS

Now that Id Software are done with *Doom 3*, do you think they'll get back to making games for multiplayer gaming like the *Quake* series? *Doom 3* was fun, but I don't see myself playing it online as much as games like *BF:1942* and UT2004.
A. Mahel, via email

Well, if Carmack's comments in this month's special report (page 24) are anything to go by, he's already got new types of games and engines in mind. The fact that they've had Raven doing Quake IV for some time now suggests Id are not only comfdortable with someone else handling the series now, considering it's arguably their strongest brand through the years, we suspect they're over the phenomena they themselves created.
PCGA

I'm wanting to buy some new hardware and I've really only got about $1,500. It's not enough for a whole PC, so what should I get?
Ryan. W, WA

This may sound odd, but if your PC isn't too dated, splash out on a big monitor. Why? Your monitor is the only part of your PC that doesn't become outdated within a year as a matter of course. A good screen is good until it breaks. **PCGA**

Perfect?

91? Are you guys mad? How could you disrespect *Doom 3* like that. This game is quite simply the best FPS ever. The only negative that can be levelled at *Doom 3* is that the plot is not the strongest around, but does that justify a score of 91? Certainly not in my opinion. *Doom 3* is such a gripping, atmospheric romp that the lack of plot can be overlooked. Every other aspect of the game is faultless. Perfect pacing, brilliant level design, the best weapons in an FPS (*Doom 3* shotgun is awesome), and the best graphics engine around to tie it all together.

I seriously think that you need to review the way in which you review games, because how could the best FPS ever get such an insulting score?
M. Ellis, via email

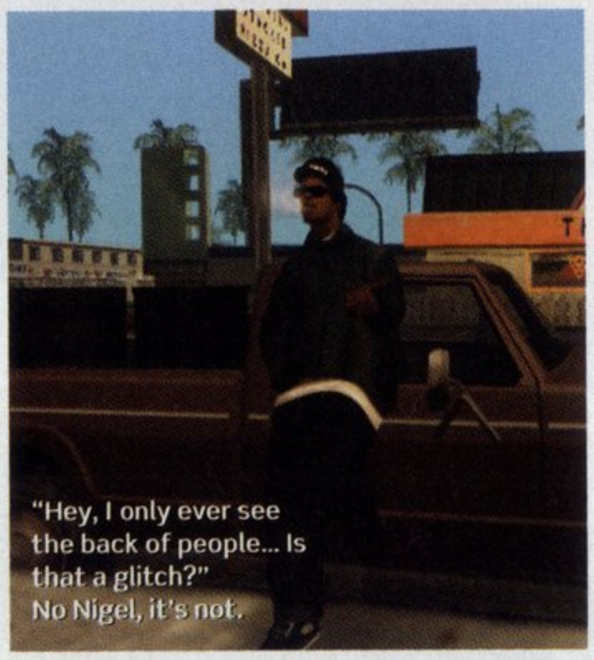
Firstly, we'd like to understand how 91 is an insulting score? In these hallowed pages, 91 = 'Go forth and purchase without fear of disappointment.'

Secondly, did you read the review? It was full of praise for the game, citing most of the things you mentioned, including the weak plot…

So you admit it's got a weak plot. We think it's forgivable overall, but it does warrant a few percent off the score. As does the 4-player limit, and the AI, which isn't that challenging for a FPS gamer. This was an awesome game, but that does not make it a faultless game (we've yet to see one of those - everything can be improved). It's just a great game, it's engine rocks, it delivers atmosphere like nothing before it, and we said so.

We'd never expect you to just change your opinion because of us, but by the same token, you're only going to be disappointed if you expect gaming mags to always think a game is as good or bad as you do. **PCGA**

LETTER OF THE MONTH



'R' you sure?

I went in to an EB store with my friend and he bought *SOCOM* for PS2. He was asked in a joking way if he was over 15 years old - He is 24. We then asked why and the reply was that someone had tryed to sue an EB store over *Grand Theft Auto* being sold to someone who was fourteen, and they now have to get ID off anyone that looks close to 15 years old if they are buying any game with over an 'M' rating.

Now my point is, when I grew up I had violence in 90% of my video games. I am not somone that likes killing, or wants to get a gun and go shoot people. When people like Mr J.wood from WA go on about game violence linked to aggressive behaviour it's nothing but trying to put the blame somewhere else.

What about people that blame games on everything? Take the time to see what your kids are buying and playing and blame yourself for not knowing what your kids are doing. Why should EB get sued because someone cant look after their kids?
Jungo Fett, QLD

They shouldn't, and we all know it. Who'd blame them for trying either? If they start refusing purchases, surely this will only enourage piracy? **PCGA**

Will the next consoles kill PC gaming?

I've never really paid much attention to console games, and I was never interested in news about where all the money was in gaming and stuff, but I'm now aware consoles are where the money is.

Can you please tell me if we can expect PC gaming to die one day because of consoles taking over? Will Microsoft try and push PC gamers onto their next Xbox rather than keep Windows for gaming?
Eddie, via email

The console is definitely the mass-market way of today, but think how many people will have a gaming - capable PC in their homes in say just five years time…

We see system publishers wanting to move towards more similar APIs across the board so developers don't have to specialise. We may see a decline in PC-only games, but we doubt that the PC will ever give up the ghost as an idea gaming platform for those who want something deep.
PCGA

ATARI

The best letter of the month wins a bundle of great games from Atari's 'Heroes' range. Send your rants, raves and reactions to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** with "CABLES" as the subject. Long or vulgar letters may be edited to fit or toned down accordingly...

Welcome to the cutting

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Three Wise Men Visions of the future from the heads of Sony, Microsoft & Nintendo
Gran Turismo 4 Polyphony speaks
Fable Molyneux makes up for Black & White
Metroid 2 Gamecube's last hope?
The Sim's 2 Better than real life

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PC GAMES ADDICT

REVIEWS

In which we put the new releases before our panel of PC gaming experts

Sims & Sims

One mainstream, the other, decidedly hardcore...

It's practically set up camp in the PC gaming charts over the years, but now the *Sims* series looks set to evolve from 'Chick-friendly PC game' to intuitive, diverse, charming virtual life. We never wanted to play a game where relieving ourselves, eating, getting to work and sleeping required careful planning for the player to squeeze these mundane events into a day. But with the *Sims 2* being a game where we can stick likenesses of our friends in there, have them perform a digital soap-opera for our amusement, it's a very different story..

The next gem this month is *Rome: Total War*, a serious strategy game that's a dream come true for anyone who loves the turn-based play of *Civ* and the classic real-time tactical battles system of *Medieval*. Reviewing this was like falling into a coma… No, it wasn't boring at all - I was simply so engrossed that I lost time.

Richard Burns Rally impressed our staff that prefer their racing games to play like simulations, and even a couple of us that didn't felt they actually learned something about offroad racing by playing the game. Fortunately *RBR* is attractive enough that Codemasters will really need to deliver with *Colin McRae Rally '05*.

Despite the quality, it was a month of disappointments in that *Evil Genius*, *Dawn of War* and *United Offensive* all arrived just too late to make the cut.

We somehow suspect we all may be playing *Half-Life 2* by the time you're reading this, as Valve have been making moves with Steam that signals all is in place for Gordan Freemans' return.

At last, the silly season commences!

DAN TOOSE
EDITOR

Scrutinised this issue...

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The PCGA review rig

There's no point reviewing new games on old PCs, otherwise we wouldn't be doing them justice. After all, how can you tell how well a game runs until you've seen it on the best machine available?

That's why we've turned to Emagen. Not just because they're able to keep working with an up to date PC to put the games through their paces, but also due to the fact that we're certain that they do the best system assembly in the business. Look at the picture below and you won't find a stray ATA cable or screw out of place. If you're serious about assembling the best machine you can, you'd do well to contact Emagen.

THE PC GAMES ADDICT REVIEW MACHINE:

- AMD Athlon XP 3000+
- Asus A7N8X Deluxe
- Corsair TWINX 512MB PC3200
- 128MB Radeon 9800 Pro
- 19" Mitsubishi Flat CRT Monitor
- Western Digital WD800JB HDD
- 16X DVD, 52x24x52 CDRW
- Antec LanBoy Chassis
- Mitsubishi 104Key Black Keyboard
- Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer

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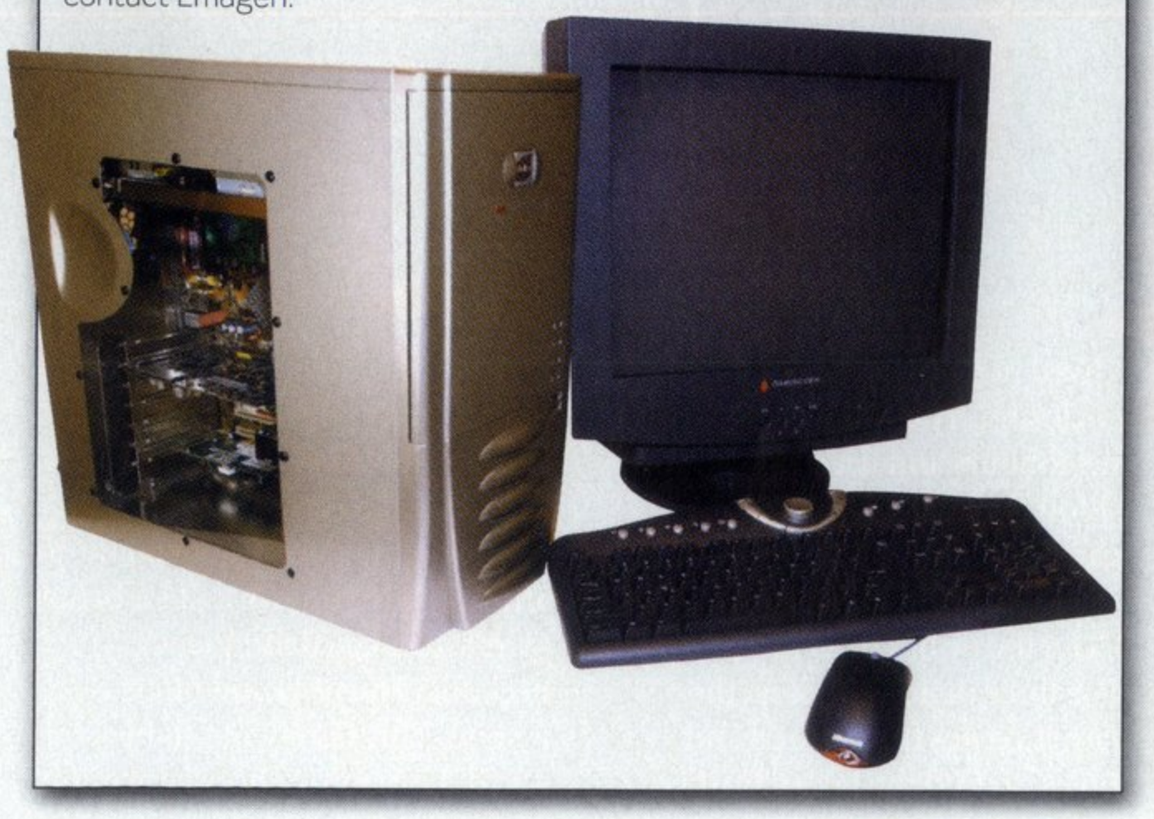


Our Scoring System Explained

0-19% ABOMINABLE
Game crime. If you see this game do not approach. Call the appropriate authorities and have it removed.

20-49% POOR
A deeply troubled and troubling effort. Think twice, even if you find it lurking in the bargain bin.

50-69% MEDIOCRE
Fans of the theme or genre can extract limited fun if they persevere. Otherwise, put your wallet away.

70-84% GOOD
Consistently enjoyable but lacks that spark of genius. Superior alternatives are usually available.

85-89% EXCELLENT
A first-class title that guarantees great gaming. Fans of the genre will revel in it.

90%+ EXCEPTIONAL
Instant classic. These games are worth trying even if you don't normally like the genre.

THE PCGA AWARD

Just as our scoring system implies, if it gets 85% or higher, it's a game worthy of your hard earned dollar. Our **GOLD GAME** award will help you spot games **PCGA** recommend.

PC GAMES GOLD GAME ★★★★★

RIGHT TO REPLY

Think we've treated a game unfairly? Or perhaps we've gone too easy on a game. Address your redress to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** or write to us via snail mail by sending your correspondence to **Feedback, PC Games Addict, Derwent Howard, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355**

Review

THE SIMS 2

Who needs friends? Not Tim

PC GAMES GOLD GAME ★★★★★

ON THE DISC Don't miss the *Sims 2* movies on the discs. Big one on the DVD > Movies

Tony can't stop piddling on the carpet. Craig has taken to dressing as a pantomime donkey. He says it's "for work", but he was sacked a week ago. Ross invites ladies over daily only to face constant, heart-breaking rejection. Tom kisses men on the lips. Mark S hasn't slept for a month, thanks to his roommate – Mark D – dancing to loud salsa tracks on the stereo. And me? I head off to school at daybreak. I work hard, heading home at three. As the sun sets, I'm off again, bringing in the only wage packet. I'm tired, lonely and depressed. In a very real way, these people make me sick.

When Maxis released *The Sims* in March of the year 2000, they could never have predicted its impact. Four years on, the virtual dollhouse/captive people breeding program has entered the global consciousness. Although not a blockbuster from day 1, *The Sims* essentially laid foundations in sales° charts, sitting pretty at number one.

Today, the basic tenet of *The Sims* hasn't changed. You drop a family or gang of housemates into a barely furnished, cold, empty house. From then on, their fate rests in your mousehand – you order them to serve dinner, take a wee, wash their hands. The interface for this is practically invisible – just select your Sim, and left click the object you want to interact with. That brings up a radial menu – a toilet may proffer 'Use', 'Clean', or 'Unclog'. A computer lets you 'Play games', 'Read email', 'Instant message' or 'Search for a job'.

Face it, at some point you're going to have to grow up.

Careers are the great responsibility. A streamlined morning routine is essential to sending off your family with smiles on their faces. First trip is to the toilet. Then a shower. As they sit down for a bowl of cereal, the car from the carpool is already beeping its horn. A quick change, and hi-ho, it's off to work they go. It's a race against time – miss the ride and you'll receive a stern telephone call from HR; sate their basic needs day after day and your Sims will attract promotions and bonuses. Then it's back home to spend the wages on bills and baubles, and generally overcoming the pitfalls of modern life.

> The kids clean the dishes by licking them

One of my favourite characters is a single father named Alex, who works as a night chef at a local restaurant. He doesn't start work until 6pm, a couple of hours after his two (adorable) kids have come home from school. He just has time to cook them a sumptuous meal before slaving in a sweaty kitchen. Back at home, the kids entertain themselves. One problem: the family is new in town, and have spent their life savings on the barest of furnishings. His daughter swings back and forth on the fridge door like a demented polar bear who's lived her entire life in a four-foot enclosure. The son invites neighbours and friends indoors to sit on the wooden floors for a game of slapsies. The children neglect their homework. They clean the dishes by licking them. For three nights running, the father comes home, tired and upset, to find the house trashed. He can't take the pressure and passes out on the front lawn.

The situation is desperate. Alex can't afford to give the kids the attention they need, nor can he afford to give up work. It's a brutal spiral. Teenage delinquency beckons. The weekend offers respite. This family has to be saved. I organise a housewarming

TOM 'HALF NELSON' FRANCIS
WANTS To pick a fight with Tim.
FEARS Losing a fight with Tim.
Somewhat implausibly. He bunks off school, preferring to hang out with the tougher kids. The entire house lives in fear of his aggressive antics – he'll shove around anyone who tries to get in his way.

MARK 'LATE NIGHT' SUTHERNS
WANTS Just one night of rest.
FEARS The morning crow.
Four beds and seven bodies doesn't add up. Mark was literally bullied out of bed, forced to go six days without a wink of sleep. Trouble is, he works as a paramedic. Fear for the patients.

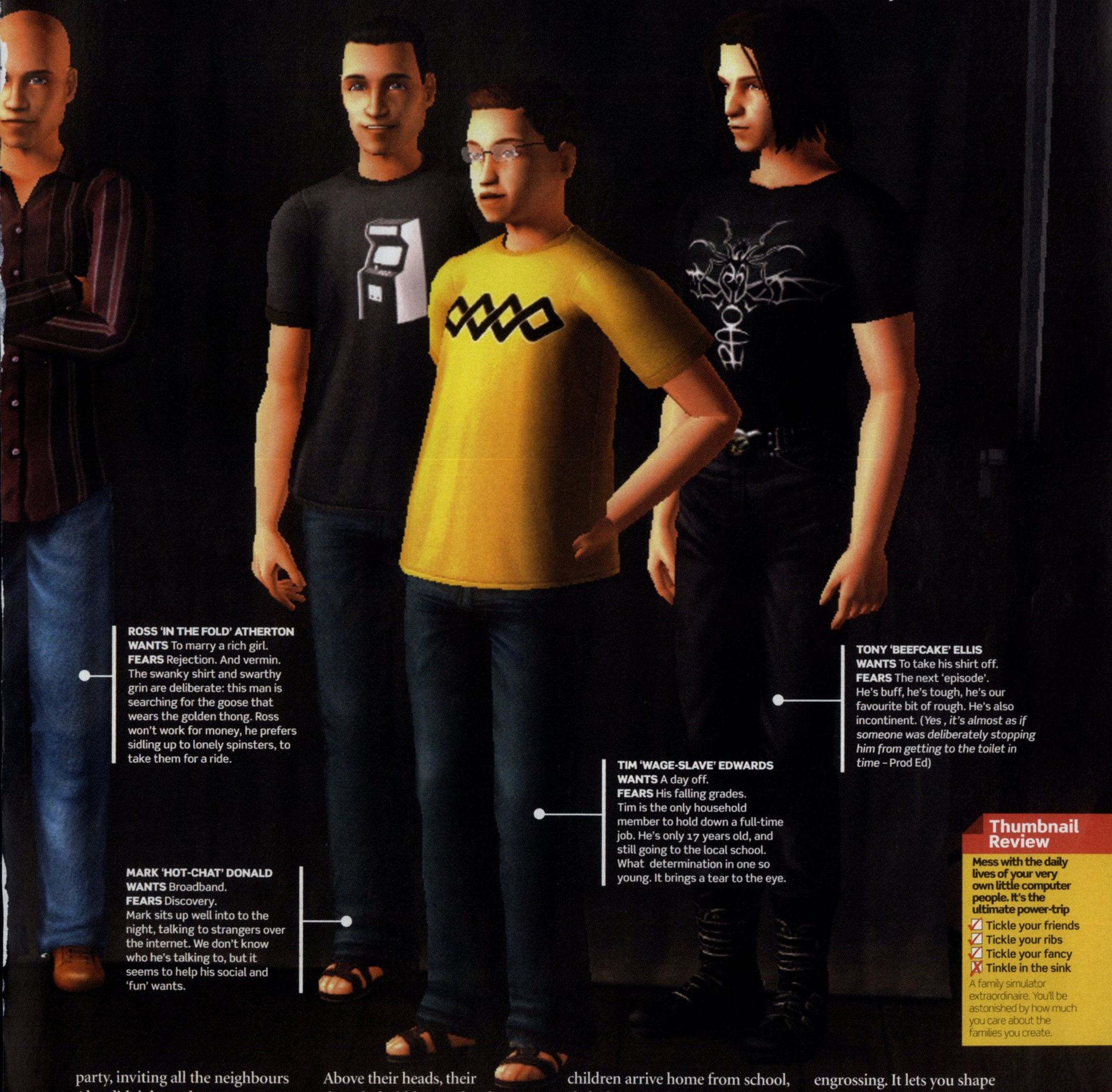
CRAIG 'FUR DONKEY' PEARSON
WANTS A little bit of attention from the neighbourhood girls.
FEARS The neighbourhood girls.
Within days of moving in, Craig had taken a job as a mascot for the local football team. The suit smelled horrendous – no-one else in the household dares approach.

And in the game...

OUR FLAT-SHARING HELL

It's a family affair

Handy new modelling tools allowed Evil Tim to recreate members of the **PCGA** team as a Sims family. Then torture us.



ROSS 'IN THE FOLD' ATHERTON
WANTS To marry a rich girl.
FEARS Rejection. And vermin.
The swanky shirt and swarthy grin are deliberate: this man is searching for the goose that wears the golden thong. Ross won't work for money, he prefers sidling up to lonely spinsters, to take them for a ride.

MARK 'HOT-CHAT' DONALD
WANTS Broadband.
FEARS Discovery.
Mark sits up well into to the night, talking to strangers over the internet. We don't know who he's talking to, but it seems to help his social and 'fun' wants.

TIM 'WAGE-SLAVE' EDWARDS
WANTS A day off.
FEARS His falling grades.
Tim is the only household member to hold down a full-time job. He's only 17 years old, and still going to the local school. What determination in one so young. It brings a tear to the eye.

TONY 'BEEFCAKE' ELLIS
WANTS To take his shirt off.
FEARS The next 'episode'.
He's buff, he's tough, he's our favourite bit of rough. He's also incontinent. (*Yes , it's almost as if someone was deliberately stopping him from getting to the toilet in time* – Prod Ed)

party, inviting all the neighbours Alex didn't have the energy to introduce himself to. Six of the eight invited guests turn up. Most are kids, who run up and down the stairs, playing at Cowboys and Indians. A single mom, Irene, sits with Alex on his shabby sofa. They chatter away, in that bizarre Simglish, well into the night.

Above their heads, their thought bubbles speak volumes: the only subject on their minds is each other.

Alex invites Irene to stay over after the party. She agrees. He moves to kiss her. She reciprocates. They go further. By the end of the weekend, Irene has moved in permanently. When the children arrive home from school, she's there, ready to help with their homework. Their grades improve. As Alex sets off for work, she pecks him on the cheek. He leaves, grinning from ear to ear. A promotion, and more sociable working hours soon come. This family lives happily ever after.

This is why *The Sims* is so engrossing. It lets you shape stories, ostensibly from nothing, into something that feels important. Those last three paragraphs were meant to illustrate a single point – that Sim life is tough, but I had to go on with the story. I had to make it to the happily ever after. You'll want that line for your own Sims. ▶

Thumbnail Review

Mess with the daily lives of your very own little computer people. It's the ultimate power-trip

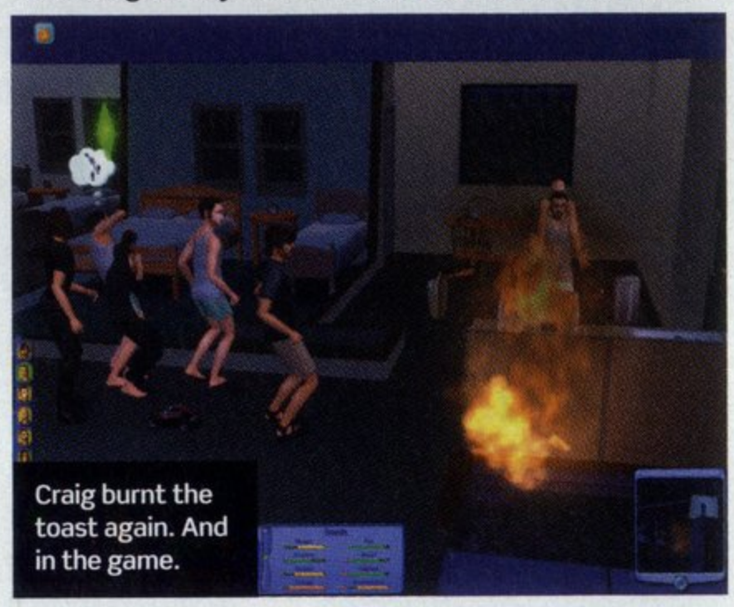
- ☑ Tickle your friends
- ☑ Tickle your ribs
- ☑ Tickle your fancy
- ☒ Tinkle in the sink

A family simulator extraordinaire. You'll be astonished by how much you care about the families you create.

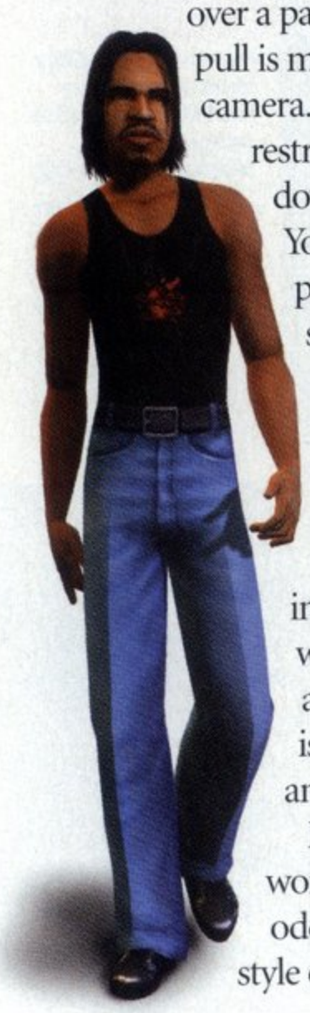
THE SIMS 2

A nice, relaxing, Capulet family breakfast. Cherrios now, tragedy later.

The Strange family crash-landed to earth. And hired a maid.


Craig burnt the toast again. And in the game.

Telling this story is fascinating enough. Shaping it on screen is spellbinding. The most noticeable improvement in *Sims 2* is the new graphics engine. You can now zoom right up into a Sim's face and marvel at the incidental details. Long hair waves as they climb stairs. Their eyes turn to their companions – a casual wave and greeting as they pass. The animation routines are *superb* – this cannot be understated. From every angle, at every moment, details pop out at you. Like the children tugging at their father's arm, desperate for attention, or the tear-jerking beauty of a Sim lover waking up, rolling over, and gently draping their arm over a partner. That emotional pull is magnified by the free camera. You're no longer restricted to looking down on your creations. You can zoom right in, peer over their shoulders. You're no longer an omniscient god presiding over an increasingly filthy household. You live *with* them, an invisible housemate, watching as they cook and clean. Clearly, this is a game for softies and voyeurs.



Maxis have worked wonders translating the odd, almost vacant art style of the first game into this grown-up, three-dimensional world. There are some beautiful touchstones: the hard beds and rough work surfaces used to provide basic comforts to your original Sims are still here. Fans will lap up the references to previous games, like the bizarre loading messages ("Partitioning Social Matrix!") or the chance to play with the ever fractious Mortimer and Bella Goth. Taking a cue from the extended and increasingly weird series of expansion packs, there's a streak of the bizarre running through the game. The father of one starter family is called "Pollination Tech #9", and is a green-skinned alien who crashed-landed in Nevada. His neighbours live in a converted barracks, the patriarch a discipline-obsessed Marine officer. The grown-ups want to fight. The kids just want to have fun. Elsewhere, the Montagues and Capulets are warring in fair Verona. Except Juliet gets caught on the balcony by her consort sneaking out after dark and, anyway, that Romeo looks a bit of a thug. Juliet's too good for him.

Ross is terrified about Mark S dying

A single word defines how *The Sims 2* improves on its prequel: 'wants'. In the original *Sims*, life was essentially directionless. The only reason to exist was the next purchase, the only route to happiness a warm fire and expensive leather furniture. That's still the major criticism for *Sim*aphobes: just what are you supposed to *do*, aside from torturing simulcra of your loved ones to death? ▶

E-ROSS

A day in the life of the gentry

From dusk till dawn, Squire Atherton has one thought: to seduce the ladies. How does he do it? Very badly, judging by today.

"Perhaps I might be getting some if you losers would move the table back to the lounge and stop waiting to greet my female companions, in my room, in your underwear."

"Writers don't wear ties..."

HEAD CANDY What's on your Sim's mind? You can find out by looking at the thought bubbles above their heads. Right now, Mark D is thinking about Ross. It's not reciprocated.

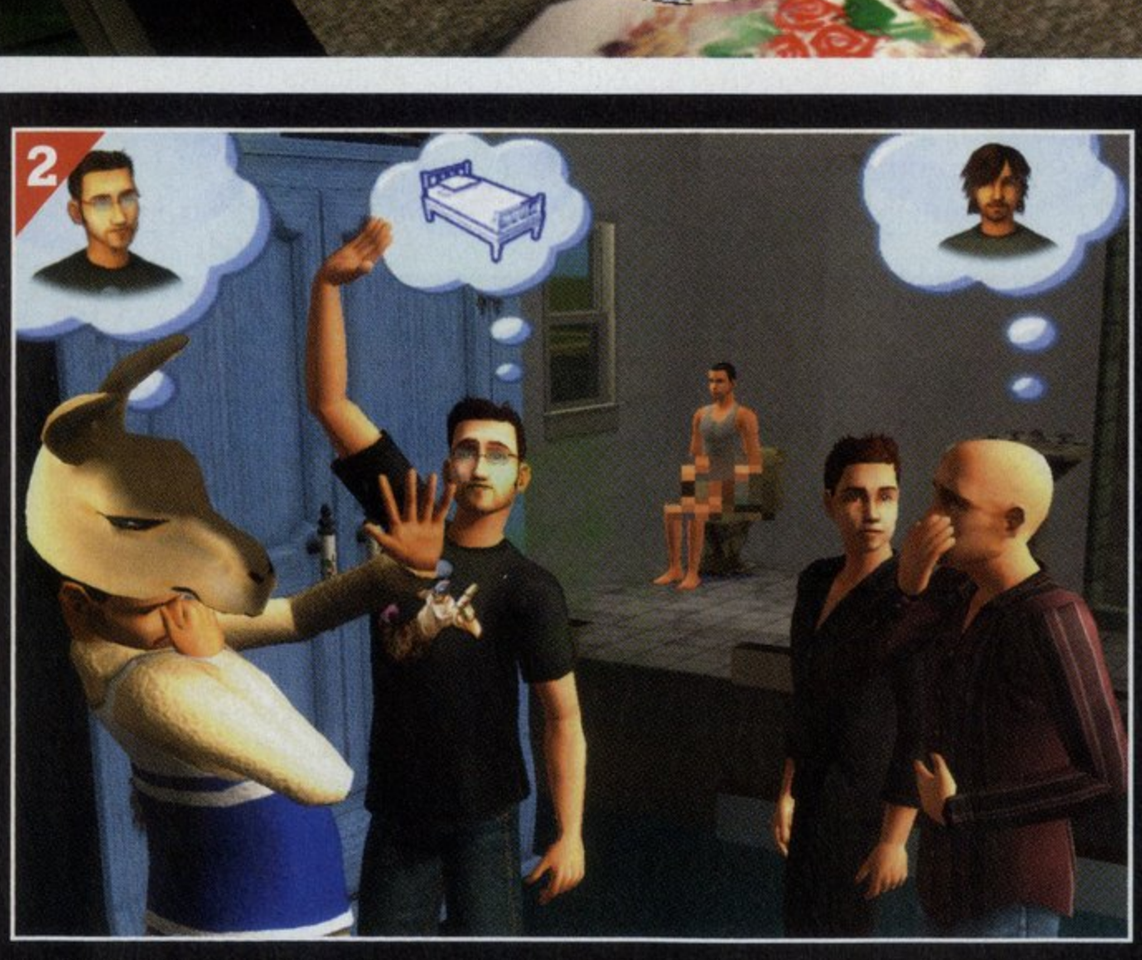
CIRCULAR PIE If you can't face the pile of dirty dishes in the sink, or if the fridge is bare, you can always order in a pizza. Obviously, first up in the morning is first to scoff the leftovers.

BEDTIME FOR BOZOS An untidy Sim won't make the bed in a morning, leaving it to fester through the day. By teatime, this place will be full of flies. Make sure the maid doesn't miss the beds out on her rounds.

BIN I've invested in this expensive chrome bin for a reason. It's larger than the standard model. That means I won't have to empty the blasted thing more than once a week. Also, I'm a sucker for chrome.

TABLE A dining room table is essential, even for the loutish Gamer family. With seven hungry mouths, we should ensure each one of us has a place set, or we'll be eating on our feet. Maybe it's time to consider two servings?

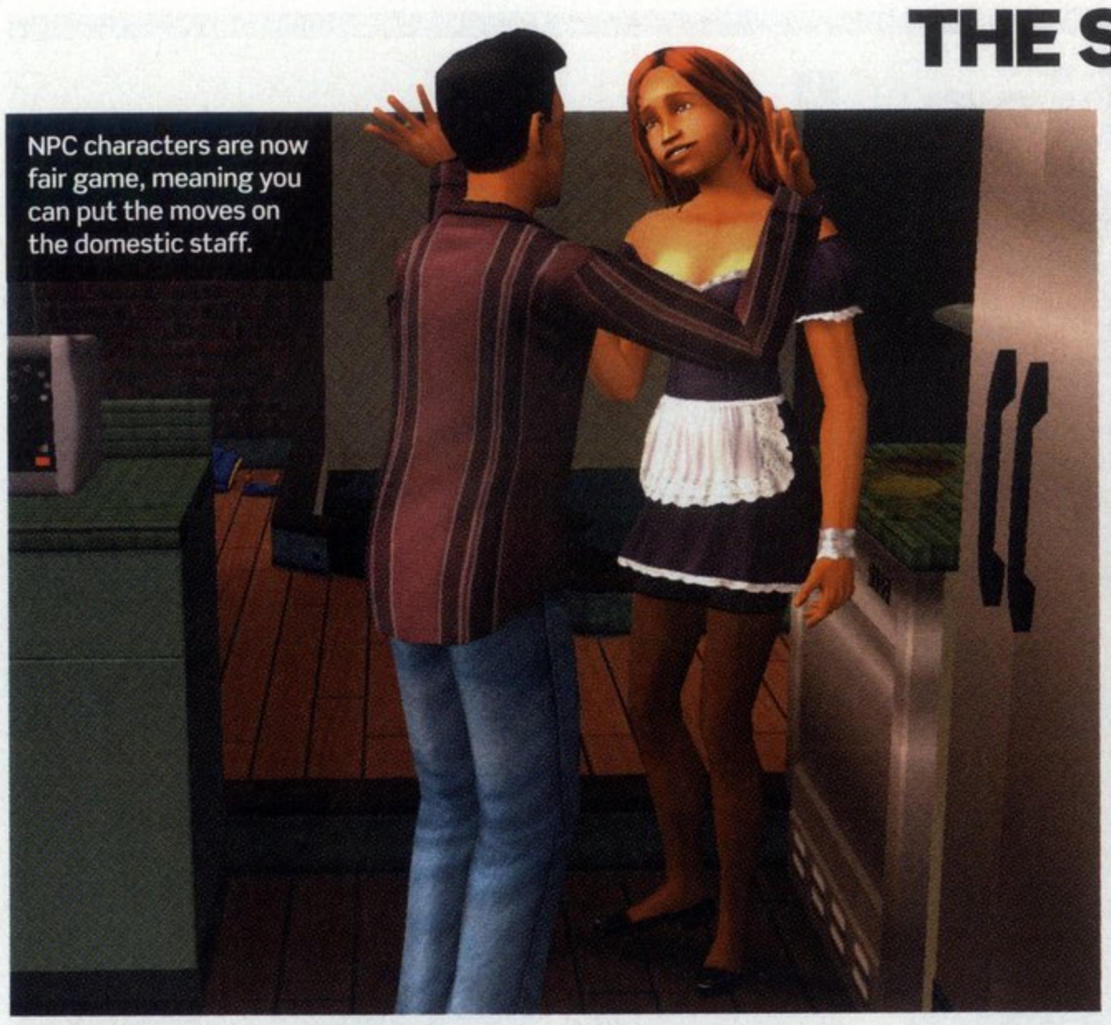
CHAIR These are the cheapest chairs in the catalogue. Having just moved into a new flat, money's tight and sacrifices have to be made. The entire family's waiting for Ross to find a rich girl to seduce and rob blind.

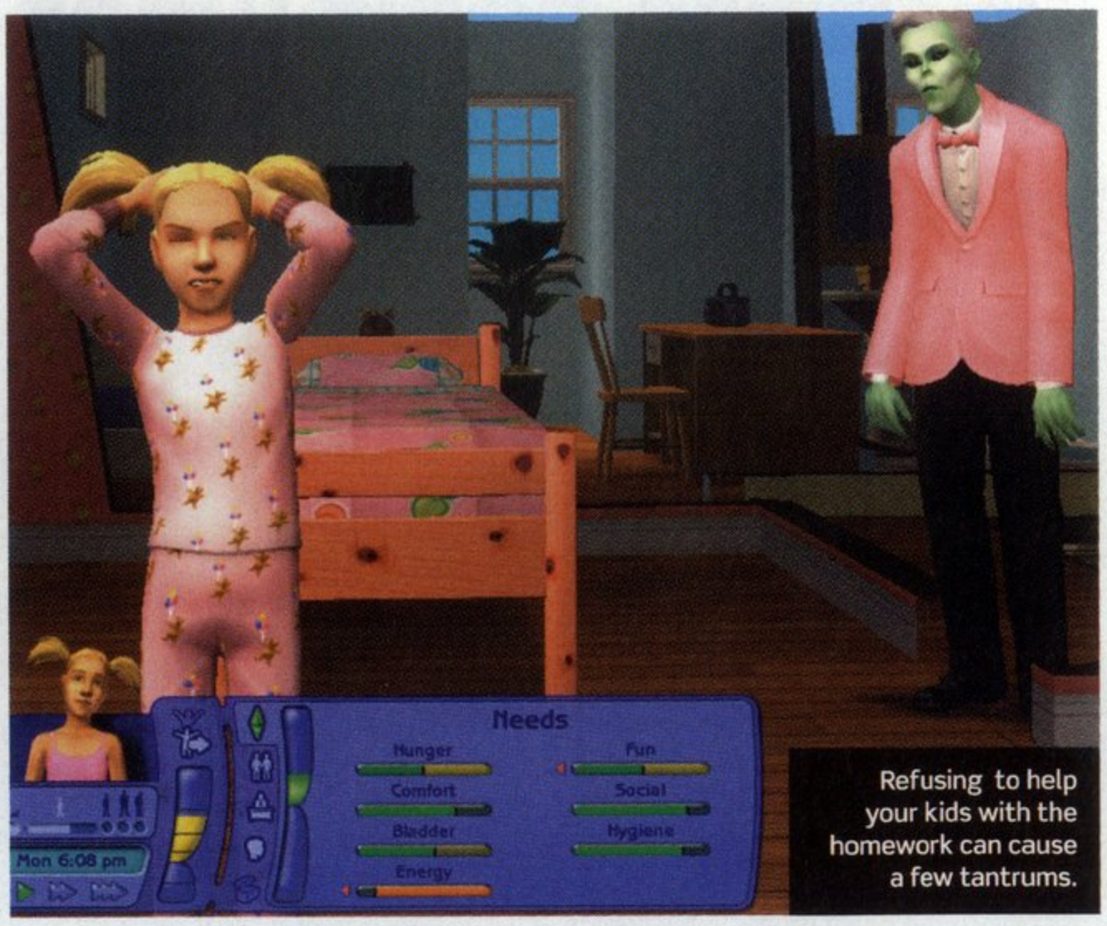


"With friends like these, I'll never attract the women. Craig smells, Mark won't shut the lav door, and Tim keeps hassling for sweeties. Where's the phone?"

"Damn damn damn. It was going so well. A couple of local harlots responded to my invitations, but Mark and Craig got there first. Looks like I'll spend another night alone. *Sniff.*"

THE SIMS 2





Refusing to help your kids with the homework can cause a few tantrums.

Now, hardwired into every Sim's DNA is a series of over-arching desires and fears. Five basic personality types are available: the need for riches, the need for popularity, the need to sprog, the need to be popular and the need for knowledge. These complement the eight basic physical needs: a good toilet once a day, a full stomach, a clean body and living space, someone to talk to, plenty of sleep, entertainment, and a comfortable place to park one's bottom.

Desires show themselves within the game as a slot-machine embedded within the interface. Every morning, simple wants like Ross' absolute yearning for a good chat with a girlfriend, a bowl of cereal, and a new set of shelves are shuffled with more long-term interests: host a great party, make best friends with Mark S, 'Woohoo!' with a rich girl (that's the facile Sims shorthand for 'do the horizontal lambada'). Alongside these, come fears. Ross is a worry-wort too. He lies awake at night, concerned that no guests will come to the party, that the girlfriend will reject his advances. He's also terrified about Mark S dying.

I started locking Mark S in a tiny cupboard

These notions change the way you play the game. There's a certain degree of social strategy involved with fulfiling your Sims' desires: to have a great party you need to know your neighbours, so it's vital to meet them as soon as possible. Then you'll need a good stereo and plenty to eat and drink. That means a bit of forward planning and investment. Maybe you should save up for a good quality barbecue, while working on your Sim's cookery skill. Good things come to those who wait.

Bad things too.

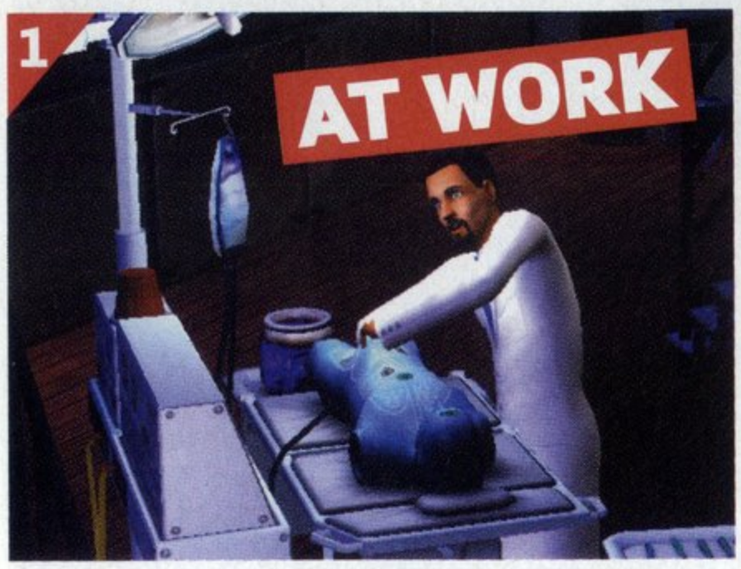
My story is a typical one: the first step was compelling Ross to irritate the hell out of Mark S, poking him in the chest. Rejection was instantaneous. But I couldn't stop pushing. A mis-timed grope was enough to send the friendship into terminal decline. They stopped talking altogether. I went further, locking Mark S in a tiny cupboard. He starved to death. I almost gave in, almost let him out for a spam sandwich and a slash. But no. Not even the protestations of an entire office were enough to save him. Result: one less *PCGA* staff member to pay and Ross, weeping, alone. That was upsetting. It almost stopped me tormenting him with the urn containing Mark's remains.

This is an enormous game, in more ways than you realise. The number of Sims you can hold in a single neighbourhood is vastly increased: therefore the number of relationships and partnerships has expanded exponentially. And *Sims 2* is a game where more means better. More things to do, more plans to try, more parties to host. When your interest in one family wanes, you can always find new tasks. Building a house from scratch, or even extending the old one using the gorgeous creation tools is a constant pleasure, for instance. There's so much to it, so many options to consider and dismiss. What style bathroom suite matches these expensive tiles? How best to utilise the light? Can we afford a patio, or should we convert the roof into an

COUGH PLEASE

Is there a doctor in the house?

Someone at Maxis is a frustrated medic. Here's the evidence



Meet Don Lothario, seducer of women and anaesthetist. He spends his time training to be a surgeon by extracting beer cans, filofaxes and expensive watches from his dummy.

Send a Sim mad (by, let's say, keeping him awake for a week) and this loopy psychiatrist will show up unannounced to sort out your head office. What a quack.

Our own Tom got the medical bug. He eventually found a job as a paramedic. The hours are terrible, the pay mediocre, but it does mean he meets plenty of friends.

"Home is where the hearth is..."

MAID MARRIABLE Hiring a maid means you don't have to worry about keeping the flat too tidy. You can even try and seduce the hired help, but the longer the stay, the more she'll charge. Cleaning: the oldest profession.

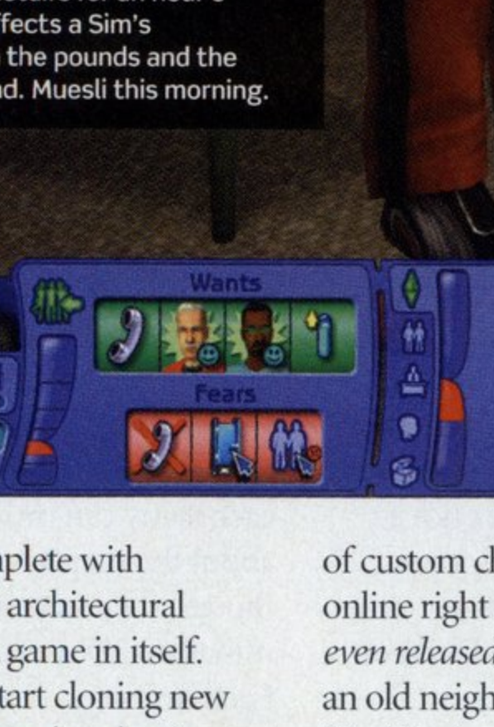
A PC GAMES ADDICT The PC is a household essential. You can kill time composing emails, using Instant Messenger, browsing job listings, or writing your best-selling novel. There are games too: no *Sims* though.

CLOTHES MAKETH When creating your Sims, you choose an entire suit of clothing. Make sure you do change outfits: the longer you leave them on, the more they begin to smell, as Craig is demonstrating here.

TRACKSUIT CHALLENGE After breakfast, Ross will be sent upstairs for an hour's workout. Fitness affects a Sim's appearance: pile on the pounds and the waistline will expand. Muesli this morning.

open terrace, complete with decking? Modern architectural planning can be a game in itself.

Or you could start cloning new Sims. My next house is going to be as cramped as possible, filled with American political figures. George Bush Junior and Senior can have a loving father-and-son relationship. John Edwards and Kerry will be best buddies. Michael Moore hates *everyone*. It'll be hilarious. Then, there's the machinima tools, the in-built movie maker and scrap-book. Or the vast quantities of custom characters available online right now, *before the game's even released*. Or, you could import an old neighbourhood from *SimCity 4*, and move your sims right in. You're never, ever going to run out of things to do.



So yes, it has that same zeitgeist-bursting potential as the original *Sims*. Running lives is hugely absorbing. Hours – *days* – melt away in the face of managing human affections. Of course, there will be some who reject *The Sims 2* purely out of principle. The basic template hasn't changed in four years. Those who found no reason to enjoy the last game will similarly find no reason to play it now.

For the rest of us, welcome to paradise. That massive score hasn't been awarded because of the gorgeous new graphics, or the sublime animations. It's been awarded for something more nebulous – it makes you *feel*. The stories you tell are genuinely heart-wrenching. Romantic comedies. Tragic feuds. Coming of age tales. Lifetime friendships. You end up so captivated by these lives: the paradox being, of course, they're your lives too. You told them to go there. You told them to kiss that man. You forced them to get into that hot-tub, with that lothario. You clicked on the cuddle command. Yes, that new-born baby is your fault. This is an extraordinary game. Don't play it. Live it.

TIM EDWARDS

PC GAMES ADDICT The ideal way for any gamer to get a life

IT'S › Beautiful › Engrossing › Tear-jerking

IT'S NOT › Directionless › Bland › That different to *The Sims*

Awesim

92%

■ **Release** September 17 ■ **Publisher** Electronic Arts ■ **Developer** Maxis ■ **They say** 600MHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb GeForce 3 ■ **We say** 1GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM
■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** http://thesims2.ea.com ■ **Community** http://thesims2.ea.com/news.php ■ **Influenced by** Coronation Street, Little Computer People ■ **Alternatively** The Sims

Review

ROME: TOTAL WAR

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GAME ★★★★★

Totally set to assault your sleeping patterns and conquer your social life...

Shogun and *Medieval* were set in the golden years of Eastern and Western feudalism respectively, and while both were very complete tactical simulations, both pale in scope compared to the setting Creative Assembly chose for the latest installment – the ancient world.

Rome conquered much of that ancient world, not through weight of numbers, savagery or fortune, but by being far more organised in war and then leaving an infrastructure that would last.

Using several groups of soldiers in formation to work together in unison was just as much of a rude awakening to some ancient people as *Rome: Total War* will be to RTS gamers who are used to relying on uber-efficient resource management to overwhelm their enemies. How fitting that the series that pioneered realistic tactical warfare should turn to the time where tactical warfare was itself pioneered.

At the time the Roman Empire represented the super power of the day, and for that reason, the Emperor was the most powerful man in the world. The civilized nature that the Empire was founded on, generally improved the lives of those within it, and made them content with the notion of the SPQR remaining in power. Without the support of borh the people and the Senate, no aspiring noble house would dare make a move to seize control of the Empire.

To complicate things there are two other noble factions earning brownie points with the Senate, increasing their power at the same time by taking new lands in Rome's name.

There are several ways to play, including Historical Battles (based on real events), Custom Battles (fantasy fracas), multiplayer and most importantly, the campaign.

Before we move into the first campaign, know that the player must choose from one of three noble houses that determines their starting location in Italy. They are the Julii in the North, the Brutii in central Italy and the Scipii house down South. This may not sound like much scope for variety, but with the other noble houses being allies via your alliegance to Rome, it does affect which direction the player can effectively expand their lands.

the same map from Medieval, just 1,400 years sooner

Which brings us to the heathens like the Gauls, Germans, Egyptians, Carthaginians and others unwilling to submit to the Roman assimilation. That's the situation facing the player as they embark on a glorious romp across Europe, bits of Africa, Asia minor, in what is essentially the same map from Medieval, just 1,400 years sooner.

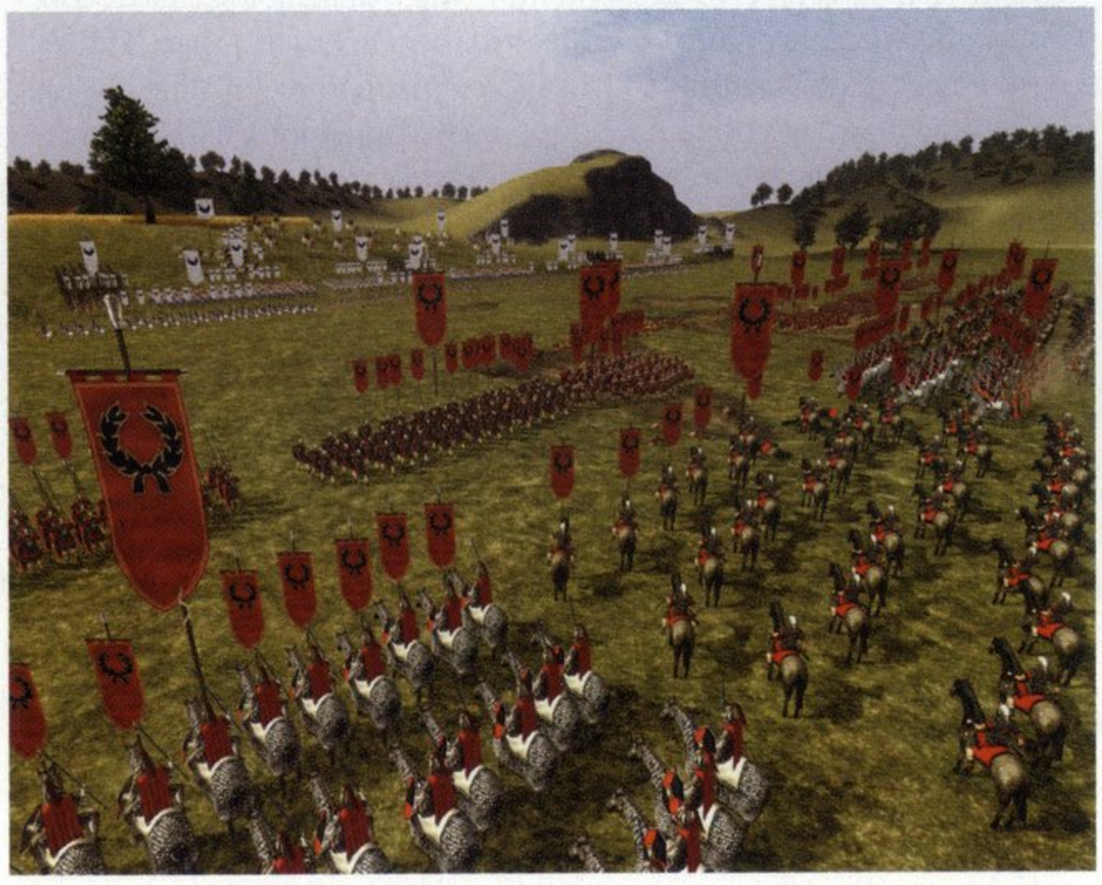
Brilliant as it was, *Medieval* never really enforced or encouraged the player to want to play as all of the varying feudal nations, but Creative Assembly have addressed this cleverly by making the non-Roman factions playable once a campaign is complete. So if you want to see what would have happened had Carthage, Dacia or the Seleucid Empire tried to dominate history, you can.

The game's Prologue starts with a simple battle to serve as a tutorial. Although adequate for getting the absolute basics down, any newcomers are unlikely to realise that they can do so many other things until they notice the advice window in the upper left corner of the screen. This handy tool works both in combat and while on the campaign map, and if listened to (yes, there's speech), will get most players doing the things they should be to play the game to its fullest.

This also helps as the player moves into the Imperial campaign, where they start with two cities and a fistful of family members to lead the armed forces of their faction in the name of Rome. It's the improvements in the turn-based side of things where Rome really takes the series forward as a strategy experience.

Of course, any keen gamer has seen the screenshots and footage of *R:TW* and realised that the visuals have been given a major overhaul, and expect combat to look glorious. Yes, there are a host of exciting new things to see on the battlefield, but it's actually the way Rome integrates the campaign map into play makes a genuine difference to how the whole game is played.

Firstly, while there are once again borders between provinces, *R:TW* takes a major deviation from the system *Medieval* used. Instead of simply moving armies one area at a time, each army can move about the map as though they were in a minature 3D world. Each unit can

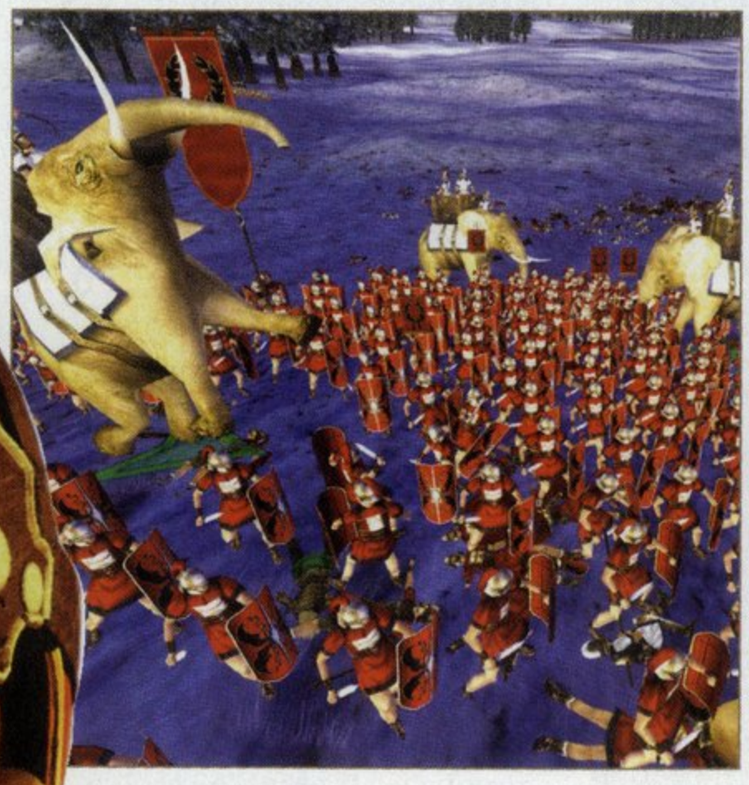


Mediolanium
1501
Patavium
11227
Segestica
1315
Segesta
4371
Arretium
7415
Rome
GIVE UNTO ROME
The dashed red lines are trade routes, essential for building up serious wealth and supporting larger armies. You can't trade with enemies and must set up a trade agreement with other factions, so diplomatic contact is an early priority.
ALL ROADS LEAD...
...to useful places. Out-of-town facilities such as roads and ports are depicted on the map, as are active trade routes - the more caravans, the more active the route is. Paved roads allow armies to move faster... but this applies to the enemy as well as your own armies.
QUICK MARCH
Armies are now moved and positioned precisely, rather than simply occupying a province. The green area indicates how far this army can move in this turn, having already taken some of its movement allowance.
BLOOD BROTHERS
The family tree is the centre of your power: providing heirs to lead your faction, Generals to lead your armies and stewards to guide your cities. As before, traits reflect and affect their deeds and abilities, and they can even earn nicknames.
Agents
Fleet
9
19
10
68
101
101
101
102
102
Marcus Maccius the "Editor". Family member
Left click to select
Right click to get further information
Family member
Servius Asinius
122512 denarii
190 BC

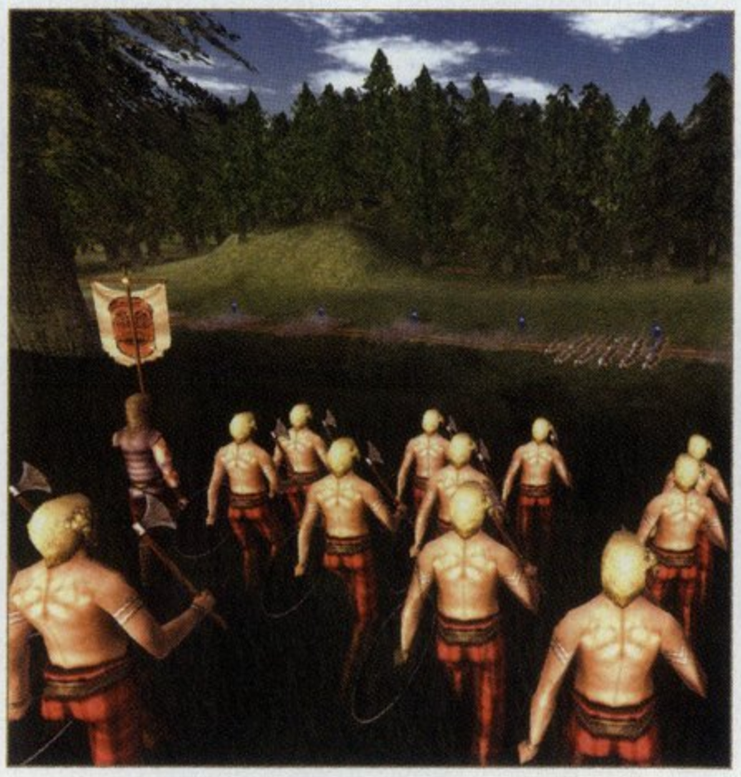
HISTORICAL BATTLES...

Great Moments in Ancient Military History...

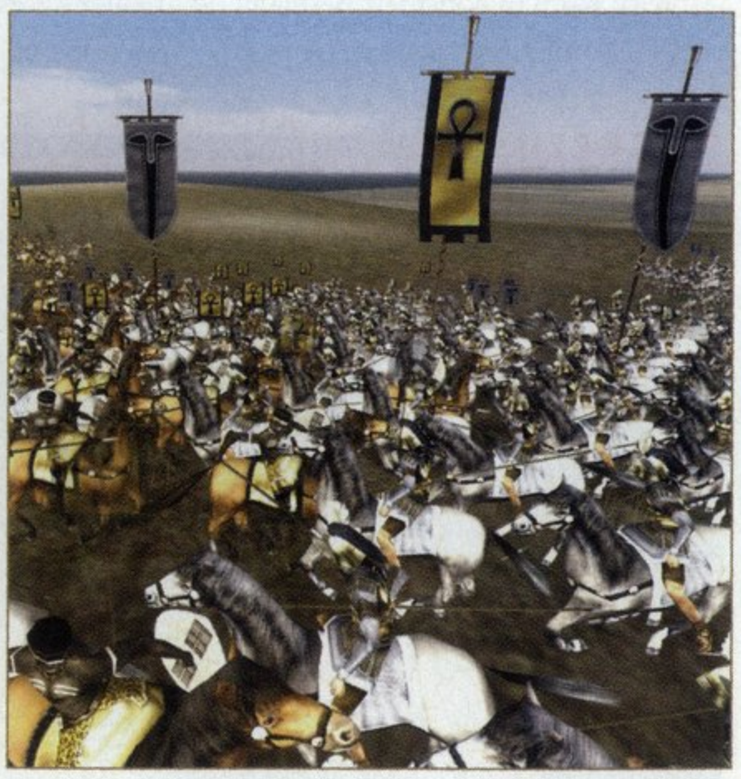
Some famous battle scenarios, that like events in history, are likely to be repeated - Due to fun rather than fate.



THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER TREBIA
This battle proved that clever use of terrain and timing charges correctly can take down a much stronger force. A much smaller Carthigian force boasting war elephants manage to lure the Romans across a freezing river and up a hill. Elephants charge across stationary ranks of enemy soldiers on an incline, and Carthigian Sacred Band cavalry sweep in from the trees to mop up. Glorious!



THE BATTLE OF TEUTOBURG FOREST
Attempting to reach the safe haven of one of their settlements, a huge Roman force takes a narrow path through the forests of Germania. With no chance to survive a standup fight, the German barbarian tribes ambush the Romans from the trees as they march toward their destination in a hope to wear down to a size they can hope to face. Clever use of war dogs can make tougher opponents rout.

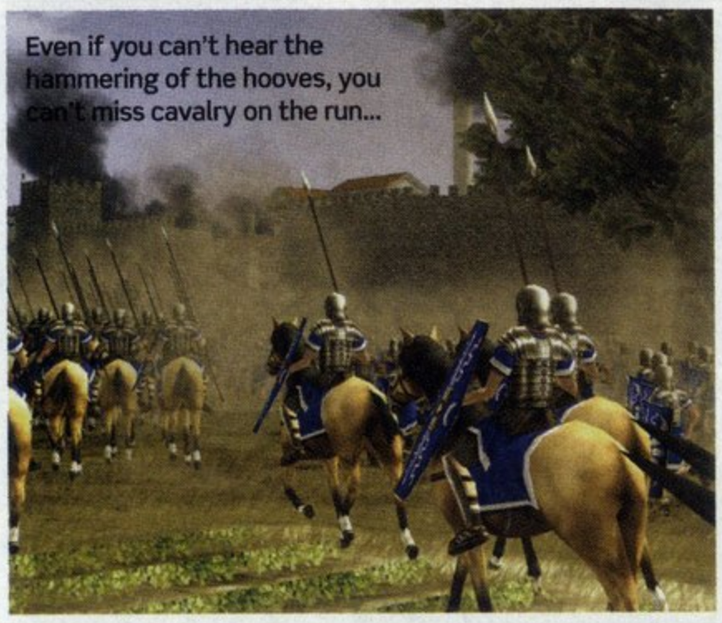


THE BATTLE OF RAPHIA
A classic example of how tempting it is for cavalry to charge after the enemy, and just how much deep water that can drop an overzealous general in, should he get separated from the his forces. In this case, it's the Seleucid King that gets caught out chest-beating. An evenly balanced battle between the Seleucids and the Egyptians, packed full of cavalry, phallanx units and a spattering of elephants for good measure.

ROME: TOTAL WAR

Venture into new areas to see them properly - No B.C. radar systems folks.

When cavalry are at the point where they can march towards a city centre in an orderly fashion like this, you know the battle is all but over...



Even if you can't hear the hammering of the hooves, you can't miss cavalry on the run...

only move so far per turn (6 months), so it's quite possible to spot and pursue an enemy army after seeing it pass by or flee.

That said, it's also possible for the enemy to vanish into the forest, potentially laying an ambush. Naturally, that's a trick the player can pull too by moving their forces into the woods, and choosing whether or not to attack passers by.

With Roman conquest being all about assimilation, the player can build roads around their villages, towns and cites, as well as take advantage of all the sorts of resources that adorn the surrounding lands. Roads have varying levels of usefulness to those that travel upon them depending on the quality of the road. The connection to how this can affect any faction's ability to mobilize armies to different places is obvious.

Rome plays more like *Civ* than you'd imagine

Impressively, the battles that the player takes control of see the forces meeting each other in a location that clearly incorporates the features of the campaign map. Sure, the scale is exaggerated and not geographically correct, but it's more than enough to make the player feel they can both hold position or approach a battle in a strategic manner.

This means *Rome* plays more like *Civ* than you'd imagine, without losing its own feel and flavour. *Civ* is wonderfully involved, but combining the sublime 3D tactical battle engine that allows the player to actually determine the outcome of the conflicts by their tactical skills and knowledge just makes this a case of having the best of both worlds.

While *Rome* may lacks *Civ*'s all encompassing cultural tech-tree, huge cross-section of historical periods and optional micromanagement of the lands around cities, it more than makes up for it by specialized to the time period so as to create a far more richly detailed and comprehensive world to conquer. And also of course, the tactically sound and wonderfully presented 3D field combat engine that caters for siege. If you think taking a city is satisfying after a long struggle in *Civ*, wait until you finally bring down a stone wall of epic proportions to enter the heart of your most dangerous enemy's capitol city when playing *R:TW*.

When playing a campaign, even though your faction is a key part of Rome's power, you still have to deal with the Senate, who regularly assign missions to the noble houses of Rome. These missions are not always military in nature, and they may be as simple as leaving a region, through to getting map information, negotiate a trade agreement or appease another faction. Many do of course involve some muscle, from the soft touch of a port blockade, through to exterminating a whole city. Naturally, there's a Senate mission

GET IN LINE

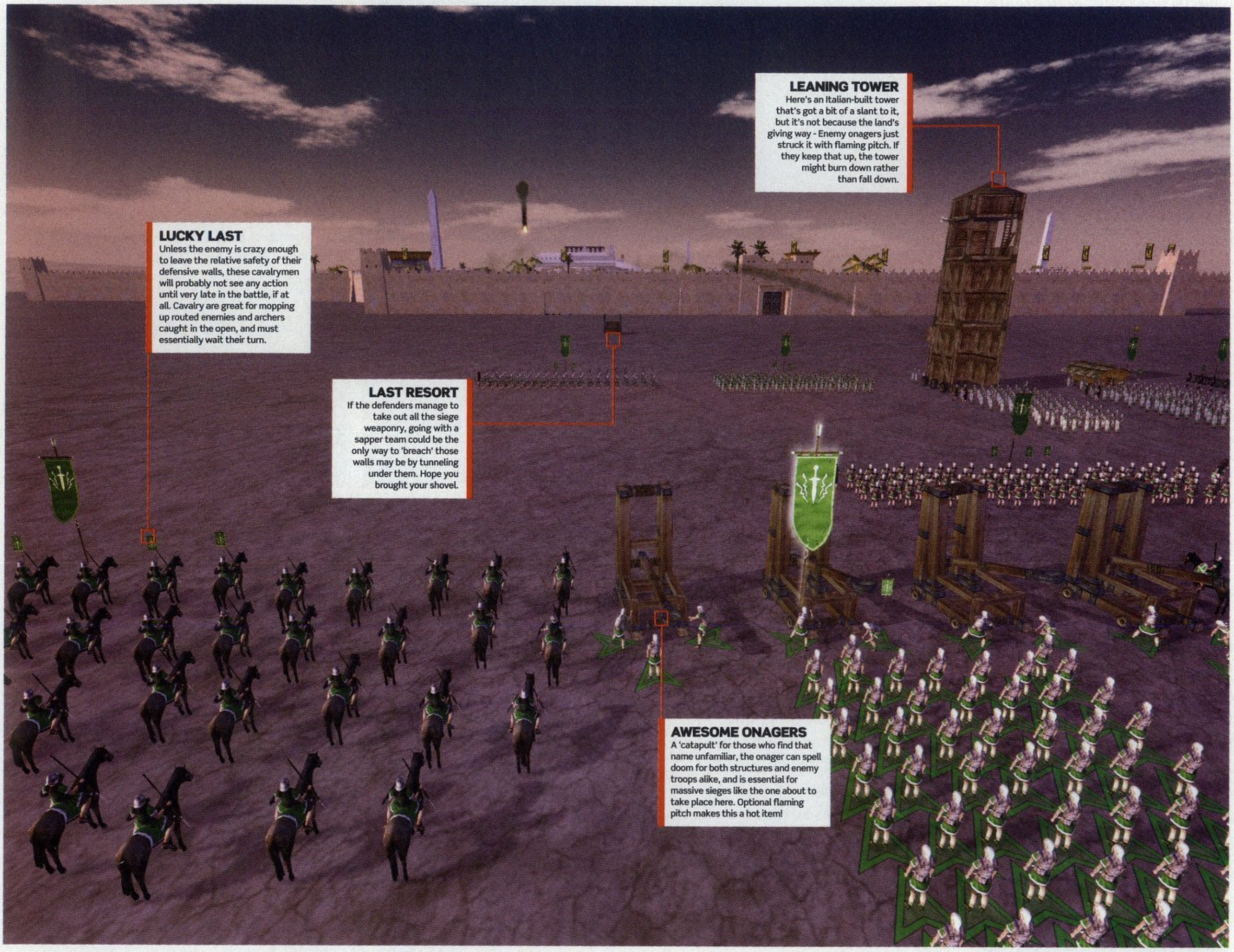
Fabulous fighting formations

Sometimes it's how you stand, not how many of you are standing...

When you're in the middle of a group of men in tight formation running along, there's little you can do to dodge incoming arrows - or worse. This 'Testudo' formation solved the problem nicely.

The phallanx formation was simple idea that was incredibly effective in any situation where the unit met their target head-on. Charging a phallanx is like skydiving onto a bed of nails without a parachute.

Siege mentality...


LEANING TOWER
Here's an Italian-built tower that's got a bit of a slant to it, but it's not because the land's giving way - Enemy onagers just struck it with flaming pitch. If they keep that up, the tower might burn down rather than fall down.
LUCKY LAST
Unless the enemy is crazy enough to leave the relative safety of their defensive walls, these cavalrymen will probably not see any action until very late in the battle, if at all. Cavalry are great for mopping up routed enemies and archers caught in the open, and must essentially wait their turn.
LAST RESORT
If the defenders manage to take out all the siege weaponry, going with a sapper team could be the only way to 'breach' those walls may be by tunneling under them. Hope you brought your shovel.
AWESOME ONAGERS
A 'catapult' for those who find that name unfamiliar, the onager can spell doom for both structures and enemy troops alike, and is essential for massive sieges like the one about to take place here. Optional flaming pitch makes this a hot item!

to exact a tribute from someone… How very Italian mobster.

There are twenty-one types of assignment in total, which makes for a more than diverse set of goals to crop up. They keep the player moving along too, as the rewards for completing these errands is two-fold. One, the player will usually be offered a reward, and two, it wins favour with the Senate.

Another way to impress the Senate is by conquering new provinces for the Empire, and that's really key to winning the people over as well. Of course, if you're overly popular and also becoming powerful enough to threaten the Senate, it may start working against you for its own protection.

You could say the Senate is like Religon in *Medieval*, something annoying you need to concede to. However it's important to note the SPQR is somewhat more reasonable than say the Catholic church. Until of course you look strong enough to challenge. When that time comes, don't expect the other factions of the Roman Empire to hand their power over to you without a fight.

The Senate is like religion in *Medieval*

Doing well invariably involves conquest, and that involves managing a war machine. This naturally starts with training units to build armies, and this part of the game works much as it did in *Medieval*. Each settlement can produce units and buildings, with different structures allowing for different unit types and features. Upgrading buildings increases their influence on the settlement, but you can't just build a military facility with nobody living there and expect it to spawn legions. Thus upgrades become available as a settlement grows in size, so only the largest cities can produce the best units.

The end result is realistic, where villages need to be governed not just taken.

Before we take that final plunge into the combat itself, we need to look at the men behind it and their evil mother in-law. She represents one of the more comical ancillary retainers leaders can acquire, each of which affect their boss in the form or penalties or bonuses to their traits. Traits are something leaders develop as they go through the game, depending on a variety of factors. Have your general sit on his arse, governing a backwater province and he'll likely become a softy, with a possible drinking problem.

Okay, we can't avoid it any longer – the battles in *Rome* are awesome, both in terms of visual splendour and cinematic appeal, and most importantly a solid tactical experience.

To satisfy the graphics-whores, know that Creative Assembly have improved things across the board. From the far more picturesque battlefields, to the increased model, texture and animation detail of the units, the special visual effects, and finally the greatly increased unit limits for grander battles, *Rome* is like *Medieval's* gorgeous cousin it wish it wasn't related to.

From the sight of watch cavalry charges knock enemies flying through the air if timed sweetly, through to the trails of smoke following fiery mass arcing from an

onager into enemy lines, it all looks better. Want to see where it lands? Hit a key and the camera tracks the shots fired by missile units.

But it must be said that *Rome* is not picture perfect, and that the graphics don't compare to that of a top FPS, except perhaps in its ability to create a sense of scale. Soldiers do not always turn to face the chap hacking into them, even when they have no other enemy to face. On the up side, they quite often do.

Though the graphics are only half the visceral experience *Rome's* battles offer, as the sound does wonders to really give the sense of a being amidst a battle. Testing showed how clever level balancing helps create the sense of where things are happening, even if they're a bit unrealistic for the purposes of making it work in the game. Hearing arrows or siege weaponry zip overhead gives an immediate impression of impending impact.

The musical score throughout R:TW is also first class, with Australian Jeff van Dyck delivering the same sort of rich orchestral pieces that won him a BAFTA award for the music in *Medieval*. Factions of different cultures have different music for their lands, with their own distinct flavour.

Of course pleasing the senses is not all *Rome*'s about, and there are new features to give many of the countless units special abilites that can be used strategically to great advantage. Obvious touches like having siege weapons and archers shoot fiery ammo, but other units enter special formations. Using the right ability in the right situation can turn a battle fast.

Past that, it's all the same good stuff that made *Medieval* an award-winning strategy game, and we'd have it no other way.

While *Rome* has taken the Total War series a huge step ahead, but it is still very much rooted on land. Sea battles take place via an automated process, and that removes one aspect of the 'Totalness' of it, even if 'totally' forgivably. It's an obvious opening for an expansion pack, although it'd also be fair to note that's a whole different kettle of fish.

Rome has taken the Total War series a huge ahead

There's a tonne of other little touches and nuances in *R:TW* that even a review of this size can't hope to cover - this is a truly huge game, and one that caters to both real-time and turn-based strategy gamers without skimping on either front at all. The intuitive advice system also means that all these the details come at a comfortable pace, rather than as some sort of confusing deluge of technical possabilities.

If you want a short game, play a historical battle, a custom battle or try a short campaign in case you've got an arvo to kill rather than a whole week. About the only situation not catered for is a multiplayer campaign. We realise it'd be a bit tedious waiting for others to take their turns and so forth, but being the first strategy game that really makes turn-based and real-time gaming work together, we'd kill to try it out with friends on the grandest scale possible. Maybe that's a better add-on pack for Creative Assembly to whip up first rather than a naval exapansion pack.

There are too many essential titles landing right now to throw out the usual 'If you buy one game this year, buy Rome' line, but I can safely say that if you buy only one strategy game this year, then buy *Rome: Total War*. You'll have no regrets - this game rocks.

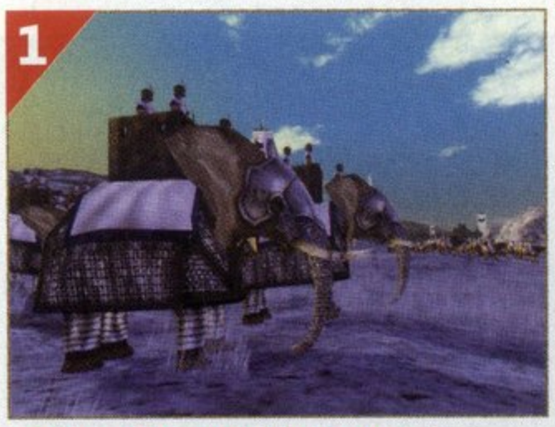
DAN TOOSE

Elephants can plough through enemy lines... and yours! Got a rampaging elephant on your hands? Use the special ability - slay elephant. Nasty.

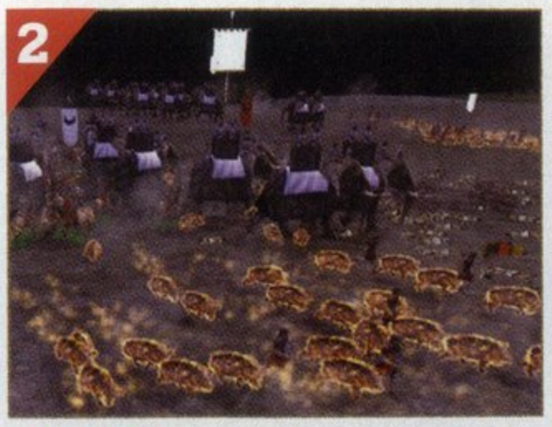
SPECIALIST UNITS

The unusual, the ugly and the uncouth...

Rome includes countless troop types. Here are six of the most weird and wonderful



Carthigian Armoured War Elephants This was the tank of the Ancient World. They fear only one thing...



Burning Pigs Okay, this may seem ludicrous, but the noise pigs set on fire made sends elephants into a mad panic. Hysterical!

Screeching Women As the name implies, they make a horrible sound and it drives the men up the wall. Uh, has much changed?

Druids No, they're not staying at the YMCA, they're chanting, which has an effect on nearby units.

Chariots As this image illustrates, chariots are an absolute nightmare for infantry, able to cut them down without even looking.

The Dogs of War Although not a match for a skilled soldier who is standing their ground, wardogs can play on man's 'irrational' fears.

PC GAMES ADDICT The best of both schools of strategy

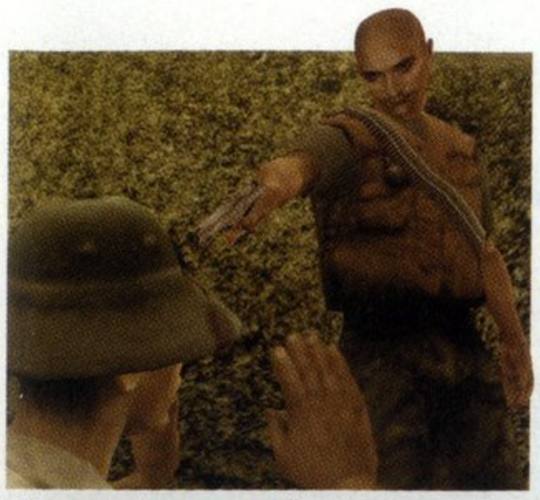
IT'S
- Amazingly deep
- Very pretty
- Our strategy pick for 2004

IT'S NOT
- been built in a day
- Too intimidating for novices

Victorious!

94%

■ **Release** Late September ■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** Creative Assembly ■ **They say** 1.GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64MB 3D card with Pixel Shaders ■ **We say** 2.0GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** 1-8, LAN or Internet ■ **Link** www.totalwar.com ■ **Influenced by** Shogun, Medieval and Toga parties! ■ **Alternatively** Medieval: Total War, Praetorians



"Then you shoot me. It'll be so cool, man!"

There are some gruesome deaths in *'Nam*.

Equal opportunities: both sexes take up arms to fight you off. Of course, what do you expect after invading their country?

SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67

Hearts and minds is just another way of saying gibs

It may have sparked controversy by having the OFLC refuse to classify it at first, but *ShellShock* would have a point. It doesn't. This isn't a harsh, realistic portrayal of a year-long tour of duty. It's a slightly fun, third-person shooter with dullard AI, invisible walls and a nasty side.

You're a rookie intent on surviving his time. Which makes a refreshing change from saving the world – this one is all about survival. The fighting is fairly meaty too. It's visceral: heads explode, body parts are torn off, and the flesh-shredding effect of a hand grenade is gruesome. The jungle is disorientating too. Charlie attacks in masses, from unlikely angles and through thick foliage.

But it's not enough. It's just run and gun. Your edgy responses are nurtured, but *ShellShock* fails to provide a smooth experience. Literally. All too often, slight inclines, bumps and logs supernaturally block your path. Inevitably you have to follow a prescribed route around the obstacle. Very annoying when you already have your sights trained.

Shots of suicide, murder, and torture

The Vietcong also respawn until you hit certain areas or objectives, but the balancing is off-key. Instead of a gradual dribble, they come in chunks, often after their family, friends and neighbours have pummelled you to within an inch of your life.

Other features are awkward too. The Vietnamese know instinctively where you are, and fire directly through masses of forest, no matter how quiet you're being. The puzzles, such as defusing bombs or finding weapon caches, are too simple and offer little challenge. It's all padding, simple gimmicks to take your mind off the game.

The base camp that occupies your time between missions is the most interesting aspect. It's home to a darkly humourous radio announcer (voiced by Dr Zoidberg himself, Billy West) who has free rein to spin '60s hits and tell ironically crude jokes. Here you get the chance to while away the boredom between action with a little 'boom, boom' with some of the locals and nurses. But the desperate, lonely side of the conflict suggested here is never fully explored. It just sits there like another layer of bubblewrap, distracting attention from the simplistic fighting.

And attempts to give the violence context simply jar. *ShellShock* tries it with aggressive cutscenes: shots of suicide, murder and torture. But then it sticks you in a game with silly-accented foreigners and *Serious Sam* swathes of enemies.

Full Metal Jacket portrayed the dehumanising effect of the American war machine. Platoon gave us an unremitting view of young men, cut loose from moral boundaries. What does *ShellShock* tell us? That highly trained soldiers struggle to climb up slight bumps. Game content needs to be good, not just controversial.

CRAIG PEARSON

PC GAMES ADDICT — Switch off your brain for dumb fun

IT'S › Twitchy › Violent › Repetitive

IT'S NOT › Important › Attractive › Interesting

Naypalm

58%

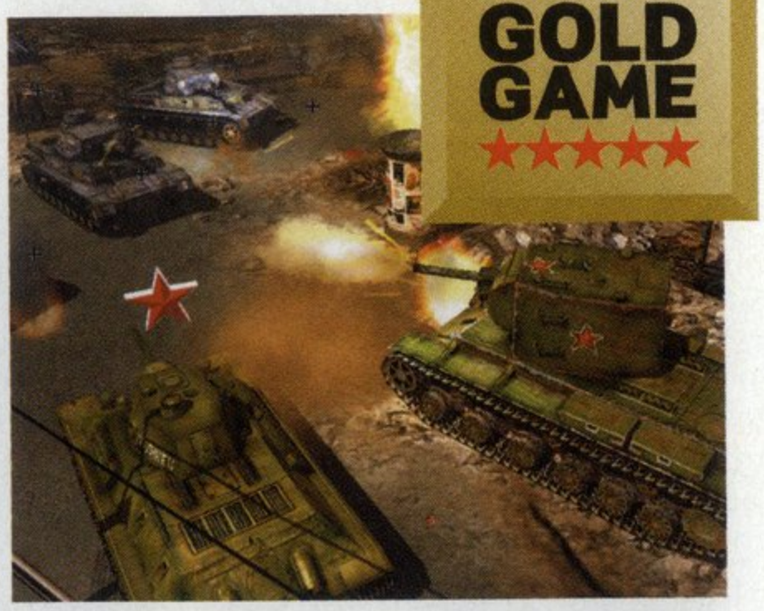
■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Eidos ■ **Developer** Guerrilla ■ **They say** P4 2.4GHz, 512Mb RAM ■ **We say** P4 2.4GHz, 1 Gb RAM
■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.shellshockgame.com ■ **Influenced by** Oliver Stone's crib notes, and Porky's ■ **Alternatively** Battlefield Vietnam

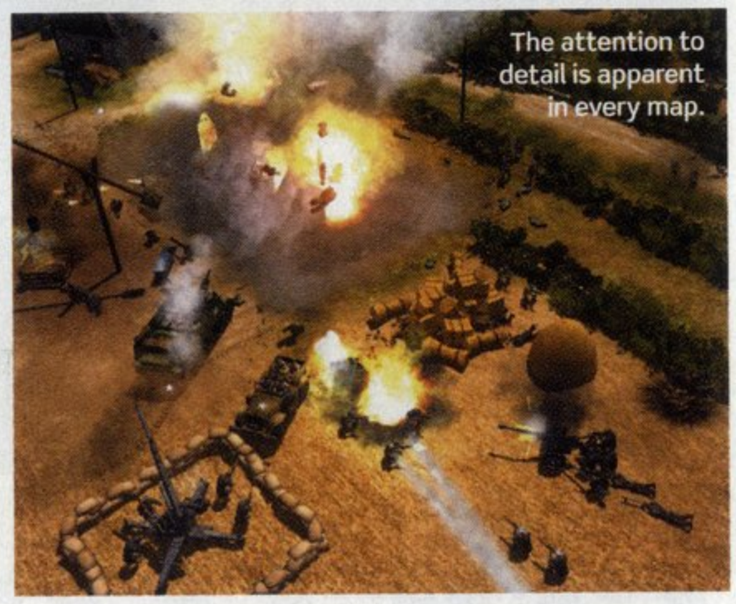
CODENAME: PANZERS

It's the ire of the tiger, it's the thrill of the fight

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GAME ★★★★★

In contrast to *Combat Mission*, winged assistance arrives instantaneously and never frags friendlies by mistake.





The attention to detail is apparent in every map.

Thumbnail Review

A ravishing WWII RTS with little respect for realism

- ☑ Fear Tigers
- ☑ Fear Panthers
- ☑ Fear Bison
- ☒ Fear Gnus

Little authenticity and very few new ideas but the package is so pretty and playable it hardly seems to matter.

After experiencing a living, breathing Tiger tank at this year's Bovington Tankfest I've stopped shouting at my *Combat Mission* bazooka teams when they freeze or flee when faced by one. The sight, sound, and smell of it, I was partially prepared for. It was the way the ground shook as it trundled past that really loosened the bowels.

With that in my mind I guess I should reprimand Stormregion for not making more of an effort to model morale in their rather lovely WWII RTS *Codename: Panzers*. This is yet another one of those games that makes encouraging noises about authenticity in its website feature list but when it comes down to it, has about as much in common with the warfare practised by Monty or Model as cheesestrings have with vintage stilton. If you want a plausible AI that takes into consideration fear and fatigue, a non-myopic LOS system, and armour penetration algorithms that mean tanks can be trashed with a single shot, then go elsewhere (*Close Combat* perhaps. Even *Sudden Strike* makes more of an effort). *Panzers* is fun but it sure ain't faithful.

Panzers is fun but it sure ain't faithful

Well, in one sense of course it *is* faithful. With the exception of *Soldiers* no WWII tactics title can boast battlegrounds that look this believable. Walls, roofs, interiors... everywhere the textures are exquisite and the attention to detail delightful. The irregularly-shaped yards and gardens with their wells, log piles, henhouses, and snuffling porkers snug inside sties, you'll probably notice as you got about your belligerent business. Less obvious, unless you make frequent use of the powerful zoom, are tiny inspired touches like the way a child's swing or an open door move gently in the breeze.

The same standard of artistry has been applied to most of the 50-odd varieties of vehicle that routinely rampage through these environments. Of the really common period marques only the Stuart seems to have been forgotten, it's absence symptomatic of a Boche bias not all that surprising considering the title. Armour may look the part but fans of *SS*, *Blitzkrieg*, and *Desert Rats vs Afrika Korps* may find the lack of damageable components (no

WHAT'S THE DAMAGE?

The price of victory

Mission success equals prestige points, which can be spent on brutes like these

1 The Sturmtiger is the dearest unit in the game. For the price of one of these you could pick up a pair of Panzer IVs.

2 Costly rocket-firing Calliope Shermans get through ammo at a fearful rate, so supply trucks should be posted close by.

3 Soviet tanks don't come any more expensive than the colossal KV2. In real-life they were actually not all that effective.

4 No Russian force would be complete without a few of these pricey but extremely vulnerable Katyusha rocket trucks.

TAKEN APART

Stalked by a stork

SKY SUPPORT It's a rare scenario that doesn't allow you to summon at least one spotter plane. At times you'll also have access to dive-bombers and – if you're lucky – a heavy bomber or paratroop transport. Troop gliders appear in the cutscenes but can't be called.

RUBBLE TROUBLE With the exception of a feeble flamethrower effect, pyrotechnics are pleasing. The collapse of buildings is particularly convincing, rolling clouds of dust engulfing nearby units. A pity though that the resulting ruins can't be exploited by grunts.

METAL MANSLAUGHTER Tracked vehicles can demolish obstacles like trees and walls 'til the cows come home without risk of damage or immobilisation. Sadly, using them to flatten foolhardy infantry or crush the many 2CVs that litter French maps appears to be impossible.

ATTIC ATTACK Where most other WWII RTSs display soldier icons above occupied buildings, *Panzers* goes to the trouble of stripping away roofs and modelling interiors. Should enemies enter this belfry the ensuing close-quarters scrap would be clearly visible.

immobilisation here), passenger carrying, digging-in and unbuttoning a tad disappointing. Commandeering enemy machines is possible though; flamethrowers and molotovs being the usual way to winkle-out crews. At this point it's worth mentioning the novel armour penetration approach. Front, rear and flanks of AFVs all have separate armour values which slowly erode during combat. Once a side is totally destroyed, damage is then deducted from the core health points of the unit. This system means you can end up like an overworked barbecue chef during larger skirmishes – constantly turning tanks to present their 'uncooked' sides to the threat.

Historically speaking, it's absurd but as a gaming device it's actually fairly engaging.

Talking of absurdity, I must admit my heart sank into my boots when, on arriving at the objective (a house) aboard a Pz III I was told I needed a freakin' key to get in. Thankfully this is by far the silliest of the 30 missions. Inspired by real battles like Kursk, Stalingrad and the D-Day landings, the majority manage to be both memorable and atmospheric; challenge guaranteed by selectable difficulty levels; replayability by secondary and secret objectives, and a pre-sortie unit purchase screen. The decision to combine western and eastern fronts in one game (there's even the odd trip to the Med) and to allow the three campaigns to be played independently is commendable, and means there's no sign of the blandness that slightly blighted *DRvsAK*. Another *DRvsAK* shortcoming that *Panzers* avoids is the lack of a skirmish mode. The one Stormregion supply is not all that appealing thanks to poor AI but it's better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick grenade.

Panzers wins you over not with fresh ideas or fidelity but with fabulous visuals, friendly controls, and finely-constructed missions. If purchase of the sensational *Soldiers* hasn't exhausted your WWII strategy budget for the back half of this year, then shell-out sharpish and start shelling.

TIM STONE

PC GAMES ADDICT — Lite, lovely, and extremely likeable

IT'S › Often gorgeous › Elegant › "Phase One"

IT'S NOT › Realistic › Easy on infantry › Ever boring

Atracktive

85%

■ **Release** September ■ **Publisher** CDV ■ **Developer** Stormregion ■ **They say** PIII 800, 256Mb RAM, Geforce 3 ■ **We say** P4 2GHz, 512Mb RAM
■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Internet, 2-8 players ■ **Link** www.panzers.de ■ **Community** http://sector.microze.co.uk ■ **Influenced by** Sudden Strike, Blitzkrieg ■ **Alternatively** Soldiers

America's ultra-fast stages are a highlight.

The chameleon paint almost works.

RICHARD BURNS RALLY

Puts the hard in Richard

Of all the hazards in the pace notes, you never hear about the devil on one side and the deep blue sea on the other. There's a certain corner speed at which more power means you'll lose grip and crash, while less power means... you'll lose grip and crash. It takes finesse to balance a car at this point, and *Richard Burns Rally* replicates this teetering edge better than any game since *Grand Prix Legends*. OK, that was a simulation of 1967's Grand Prix cars, but if anything they had even less grip than these not-quite-WRC motors. And yes, that is realistic.

This is very much a simulation, in the sense that the 'game' side of things is only fitfully addressed. Fortunately, it'll never have quite the reputation of *GPL* for brain-scarring toughness, if only because the three difficulty levels drop quite low – choose Rookie, complete a stage without crashing and you should be well in front. It's a relief, frankly, and allows you to complete your apprenticeship without becoming totally demoralised. It also allows you to unlock a few more of the seven cars available, and while that's hardly an impressive number these days, it hardly matters. The physics model in *RBR*'s world is so profoundly complex that the spectators probably believe in God; just the differing sizes, weights and layouts of the cars alone is enough to create a unique test. Some of the differences are obvious – the quickness of steering, for instance, or the grunt of the engine – but there are myriad subtleties that demand adjustments to your driving style. Other games may offer bigger numbers, but you probably won't find seven more meaningfully-different driving models among them.

The physics mode is profoundly complex

You unlock other 'privileges' as you work through the six countries, such as gaining access to stages in Quick Rally and the hotseat-only multiplayer mode, but these are hardly going to set your world on fire. But if you're here for the destination, rather than the journey, then you're riding the wrong road anyway; despite a few token unlocks, the structure is the familiar 'here it is, get on with it' of no-nonsense simulation. With two important exceptions. The first of these is the Rally School, a licence-test style requirement voiced by Richard Burns. It's interesting as far as it goes, although poorly structured – Burns' lines are constantly repeated, even before you inevitably try that again

Thumbnail Review

Hardcore rallying that is simulation first, arcade fun dead last

- ☑ Intense physics
- ☑ Intense tuning
- ☑ Intense driving
- ☒ Boost pickups

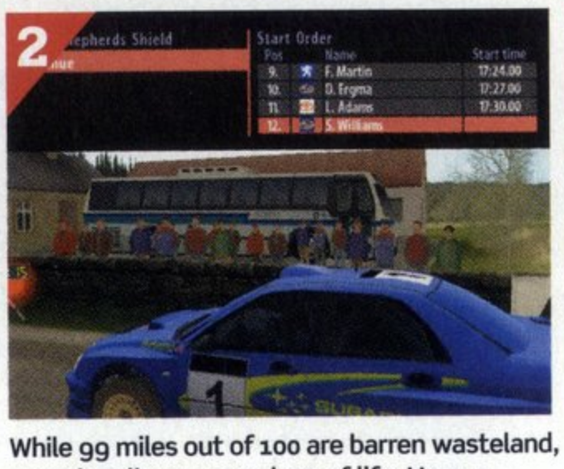
Drive a frighteningly-accelerative rally car on realistically-narrow, rutted, gripless roads. Frustrated racer? Buy. Find *CMR* challenging? Walk away...

HAPPY SNAPS

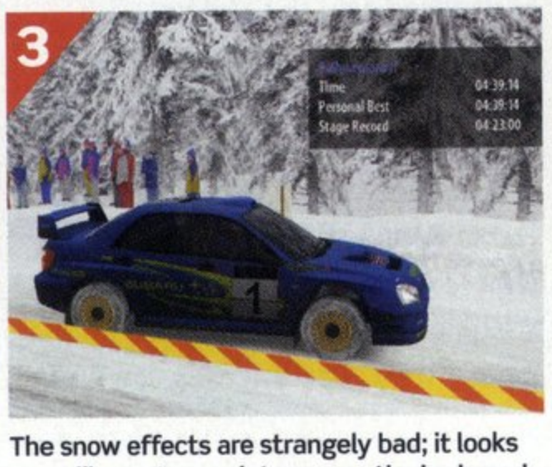
Remarkably unremarkable

Ignore the physics and all is average: car choice, countries, licence, looks... are we having fun yet?

Marshals are sensibly and warmly dressed, but that doesn't mean you can't kill them with a car while the little perverts film it.



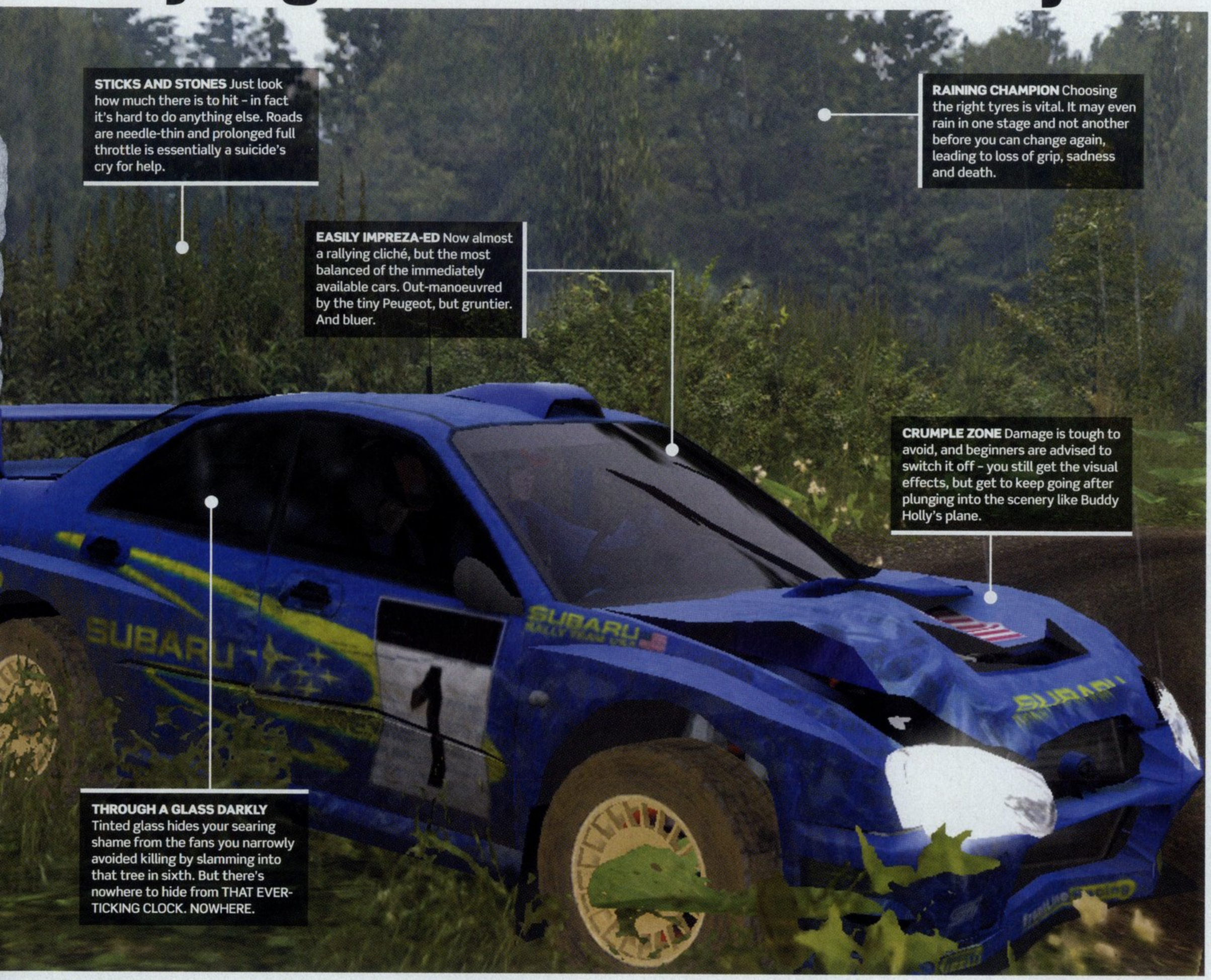
While 99 miles out of 100 are barren wasteland, occasionally you see signs of life. Here, a group of die-hard nerds have been bused in.



The snow effects are strangely bad; it looks more like watery paint once on the bodywork. And are they wheels, or Liquorice Allsorts?

The final stage, Mineshaft, ends with this enormous, car-shattering jump. See the 'All-Wheel Drive' banner? Doesn't help up here.

"If you go down to the woods today..."


STICKS AND STONES Just look how much there is to hit – in fact it's hard to do anything else. Roads are needle-thin and prolonged full throttle is essentially a suicide's cry for help.
RAINING CHAMPION Choosing the right tyres is vital. It may even rain in one stage and not another before you can change again, leading to loss of grip, sadness and death.
EASILY IMPREZA-ED Now almost a rallying cliché, but the most balanced of the immediately available cars. Out-manoeuvred by the tiny Peugeot, but gruntier. And bluer.
CRUMPLE ZONE Damage is tough to avoid, and beginners are advised to switch it off – you still get the visual effects, but get to keep going after plunging into the scenery like Buddy Holly's plane.
THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY Tinted glass hides your searing shame from the fans you narrowly avoided killing by slamming into that tree in sixth. But there's nowhere to hide from THAT EVER-TICKING CLOCK. NOWHERE.

without writing off the car – and it's sliced up badly with annoying loads. More importantly, it doesn't actually prepare you for the game. You're dropped right in the middle of it.

Steep learning curve? You could fix shelves to it and call it a wall. The Rally School covers such things as left-foot braking, the Scandinavian Flick, handbrake turns and lift-off oversteer – which is all good – but makes no mention of how to deal with pace notes, cambers, ruts or the ideal line. There's a brief demonstration of the effects of soft and hard suspension, but nothing to help you tune the baffling differential settings, or anything else.

Essentially, the Rally School is all about the car, whereas Burns' advice on getting the best out of the road would have been welcome.

The other key feature is Burns' Challenges. Here you have six stages over which you race against Richard's ghost car, and – assuming you can keep up – you can learn a lot from watching what he's doing. Sadly, it won't have been hard for Burns to choose his favourite stages, as the quality is erratic, and too many are just too slow for fun. The single Tarmac rally is a particular disappointment, grinding you down with seemingly endless hairpins so tight you could run round them quicker. Understeering into the barrier at 30kph isn't fun, either, but it's annoyingly common. Strangely, we found tight, slow corners far more difficult to get round than fast ones, even when we were just trying to trundle through sensibly without sliding. Fact: handbrake turns are easier in a real rally car.

Colin McRae needn't worry. The popular vote will remain with him. *Richard Burns Rally* will appeal to a very select group of driving game zealots/frustrated racers, who'll revel in the beautifully-nuanced handling, suck up the pain and forgive the slightly scrappy design. Ironically, Burns' Challenges are perhaps more revealing than the much-trumpeted Rally School, but he's still not going to teach you how to drive a rally car. You're going to have to figure that out for yourself. And quickly.

STEVE WILLIAMS

PC GAMES ADDICT **Brutally realistic rallying for the hardcore**

IT'S › Narrow minded › Hard work › All about the physics

IT'S NOT › Fluffy › Colin McRae › Always fun

Slideruler

82%

■ **Release** September ■ **Publisher** SCi ■ **Developer** Warthog ■ **They say** 1.6GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 2.6GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** hotseat, up to 4 ■ **Link** www.richardburnsrally.com ■ **Influenced by** Grand Prix Legends, Colin McRae's bank balance ■ **Alternatively** Colin McRae Rally 04

WAR IS COMING: NOVEMBER 2004

WWW.KILLZONEPS2.COM

Exclusive to PlayStation®2

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And they say shooter games can't be educational.

ARMY MEN SARGE'S WAR

Leave him to it

The series now stands at nine titles in six years, and in all that time an *Army Men* games have been god awful. That really ought to influence any decisions to make more of the damn things, but the game gods work in mysterious ways. I'll probably be reviewing *Army Men: Sarge Trudges To War For Just One Last Mission* when I'm old and even balder.

This time, Sarge, heroic squad leader of the Greens, is pretty much on his own, and in a thoroughly modern third-person perspective. A rebel Tan army is under the influence of a rogue General etc etc, and you must blah blah. Co-development with an Xbox version means decent visuals but shockingly small load areas – in some cases you can see from one end of a level to another.

Sarge's war is an uncomplicated one: a few weapons, ammo pickups, health packs, occasional fixed gun emplacements and endless hordes of Tans to gun down. Some nice touches distract your attention from the utterly unimaginative core of the game: when badly hit, Sarge loses chunks from his plastic body. More irritatingly, the game veers from insultingly easy to moments of extreme difficulty; it just feels poorly tested. This inconsistency, combined with a strafe function which actually makes Sarge move in an inverted arc, is enough to get any soldier's blood boiling.

Endless hordes of Tans to gun down

A reasonable effort at a plot has been shoehorned into the well animated cutscenes, but the effect is akin to applying make-up to a bucktoothed snagglepuss.

And even the sub-$50 asking price is simply too high to pay for such mid-quality fare. In this busy September, it's no wonder that this Army Men game is now at a budget price, but even then, the human cost of this war is just too much.

ROSS ATHERTON

PC GAMES

Simplistic shooter that fails to promote Sarge above his rank.

48%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Take Two ■ **Developer** Global Star Software
■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.take2games.com.au ■ **Alternatively** Conflict Desert Storm 2

TRANSPORT GIANT

Actually, using giants for road haulage would work

Until recently I suffered from a paralysing fear of missing trains and buses. Hence I used to miss them all the time. Happily, I'm better now, but playing *Transport Giant* makes me wish for a relapse, in the hope that might liven things up a bit.

In a blistering change from *Industry Giant*, the game's predecessor, you're given the dream job of a haulage middle-man. It's like a childhood wish come true. You can manage the moving of goods back and forth between the many industries that dot the landscape. Or set up transport routes, then try to satisfy the demands of your customers using the vast range of land, sea and air vehicles available. Salivating yet? Nothing stands still in transport though. Heh, just a little haulier's joke there. But it's true, you start with horse-drawn carts in 1850 and, if you're a good transit manager, you can work your way up to the whooshy lorries and helicopters of today.

There's a certain hypnotic attraction

But lo! The advances turn out to be purely cosmetic. Almost unbelievably, you find yourself caring very little about where, when and why you're doing this. What's the world coming to when hauling grain in the 19th century doesn't feel any different from hauling grain in the modern era? Even the profit motive is completely crushed by the monotony quotient.

No effort is made to make you feel that you're doing anything more than fiddling with a bunch of numbers. Never do you *feel* like you're running a transport company.

Yet no matter how much I want to tear apart *Transport Giant*, there is *some* value to be gained from its tedium. It's like watching a lava lamp; when your transport network is ticking over nicely, there's a certain hypnotic attraction to it all. But, like a lava lamp, the more you watch it, the more you feel like you've wasted your money.

RICHARD BETT

PC GAMES

You could stuff it full of duck feathers and call it a pillow.

64%

The joys of realism, this little industrial hole is your kind of town in *TG*.

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** JoWooD ■ **Developer** Studio Ebensee
■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.transportgiant.com ■ **Alternatively** Railroad Tycoon 3

Review

KOHAN II KINGS OF WAR

A secret Star Wars game: in singleplayer you can *Kohan* Solo

Insufficient funds for Gift of Iron. Requires 130.
Gathering construction complete
Sanctuary - Town
Health 2600/2600
Production
Upgrades
Sanctuary - City
Maj Baruka
Player
These chaps are like elves, except with a different name, so not like elves at all. Oh no.

Kohan's always proved to be a disappointment to pulpheads. It seems obvious: if you choose a name that evokes the greatest barbarian hero in fiction, then your game should feature broadswords, pushing a giant wheel around for 20 years for no discernible purpose, and barely suppressed homo-eroticism. Instead, you're given a cerebral fantasy RTS with absolutely nothing to do with Conan. Rarely has the 'randomly throw together consonants and hope it sounds like Tolkien' approach to game-naming so sorely misled us.

But there's lots to admire here. While *Kohan* owes much to its peers, meaning that anyone who's played an RTS can immediately get stuck in, there are considerable subtleties for a veteran. Its innovations are less headline grabbing than this year's snazzy new rendering technologies, but more fundamental.

The first one you'll notice is that rather than generating individual units, you create units of troops. However, these don't have to be a simple grouping of one troop type. In a simple screen you can specify their exact constitution. A front row of swordsmen or pikes? Archers or cavalry on the flanks? And a sorcerer or a cleric in support? This means combat is less of a simple mass-rumble, and more structured. Not as much as you'd hope – it's a long way from *Total War* – but support troops will stay in vaguely sensible positions while the front row pile in.

But also remember to run away. As long as a single unit of the grouping lives, when brought into the area surrounding your settlements, they'll heal and resupply with fresh troops. Considering units gain experience as they survive, this retreating to patch up adds fluidity to the strategy. Equally, the need to have as many as these supply zones as possible encourages players not to huddle in a single settlement. Also helping here is a very tight unit limit, directly linked to settlement numbers, requiring you to expand to other locations or be over-run.

But also remember to run away

With six unique races and a more sophisticated economic model than most, *and* a random-map generator, this provides impressive variability for online and skirmish play.

Not that it's perfect. As seems inevitable with games of this type, its fantasy world is laughably bad. The po-faced dialogue will have the innuendo-minded gamer snickering. Worst, the controls have a tendency for over-elaboration. For example, why have a separate button for each mine, when you can only ever build each on their specific resource anyway? But put aside these niggles. This is a serious RTS for a serious RTS gamer.

Seriously, though – someone make a decent Conan game. We're *dying* here.

KIERON GILLEN

PC GAMES ADDICT Lacks glamour, full of craftsmanship

IT'S › Strategy › In real-time › Real-time strategy

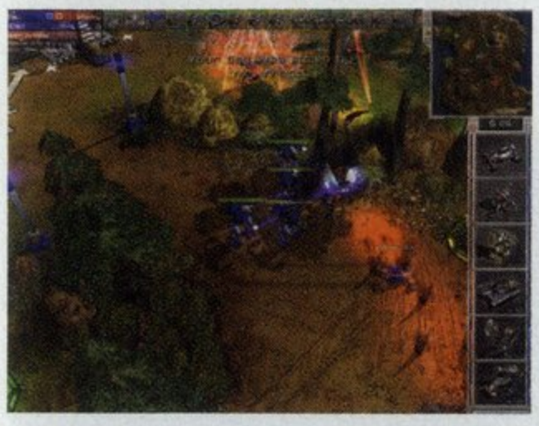
IT'S NOT › Revolutionary › Overwhelming › Cliche-packed. Oh – sorry. It is

OKhan

80%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Take Two ■ **Developer** TimeGate Studios ■ **They say** 1.5GHz, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb GeForce 3/Radeon 8500, 700Mb HD space ■ **We say** 2.GHz, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card, XP ■ **Multiplayer** Internet, LAN, up to 12 ■ **Community** www.strategyplanet.com/kohan ■ **Link** www.timegate.com/kow ■ **Influenced by** Warcraft, Woolly Jumpers ■ **Alternatively** Warcraft III

My violent tendencies explained at last!



Berserkers unleash red lighting at groups.

Bombing Run, Double Domination... *UT2004*?

Going it alone is not advisable. Any unit can be pulverised by a small group of varied enemies.

ARENA WARS

Multiplayer strategy for the casual gaming masses?

Arena Wars developer, Ascaron, are better known for their recent *Diablo*-style RPG, *Sacred*. However, a similar approach to game development has been utilised here, and that is the shameless borrowing of ideas from another gaming property. Throw *UT2004* into a blender with any RTS game you care to grab off the shelf, and you'd end up with a dubious brew that tasted somewhat like *Arena Wars*.

The idea seems to be that your casual gamer doesn't have the time nor inclination to log on and spend countless hours challenging their virtual buddies, and thus the way to break that market is to offer them something light, simple and addictive. This is sound reasoning, however we doubt whether *Arena Wars* is really the answer.

Unlikely to enamour any avid gamer...

It is, essentially, a real-time strategy game, but one where no resource gathering is required (the crowd roars) and you can get through bouts in as little as ten minutes. With a set amount of money to spend on units, you can generate a variety of generic RTS units to go forth and do your bidding. There's the quick and nimble Buggy; the hulking firepower of the mech-style Berserker and its lightweight counterparts, the Walker and the Spider; there's the obligatory tank unit, the Destroyer; and an artillery unit, simply named, the Artillery. That's pretty much it; however, each unit will cost a different amount to build based on their firepower and general usefulness, so deciding on which units to generate to realise your goals is your only real task of resource management.

The objectives vary between three very familiar game types: Capture the Flag, Bombing Run, and Double Domination. Yes, and they even have the *UT2K4*-style booming announcer's voice to commentate on the proceedings.

The games are played across simple, overhead view maps of small islands, although the more complex ones incorporate warpgates, deadly lakes of lava, ramps and the like. As you'd expect from a game that offers these game modes and generic units, there are a variety of powerups that you can steal from points on the map to speed up and power up your own units, or 'bad' power-ups that you can unleash upon your enemy to slow them down or jam their weapons. All the elements are there for a decent multiplayer game. However, that's all it really amounts to, a decent, if predictable and uninspiring game unlikely to enamour any avid gamer for more than a few nights. Thanks to a comprehensive community site at arenawars.net, a ladder system, player stats and an in-game editor, *Arena Wars* will no doubt develop a fervent following, but with so much coming it, it'll be quite niche.

ELIOT FISH

PC GAMES ADDICT Quick and easy gaming with zero frills.

IT IS › Easy to master › Generic › fun for a quick blast

IT ISN'T › Very in-depth › A game with long-term appeal

Generic

65%

■ **Release** Out Now ■ **Publisher** Gathering ■ **Developer** Ascaron ■ **They say** 700MHz, 256MB RAM, GeForce 2 MX / Radeon 7500 or better ■ **We say** They're right
■ **Multi-player** 8 player LAN and online, plus 4 spectators ■ **Link** www.arenawars.net ■ **Community** www.geekyfansite.com ■ **Influenced by** UT2k4, Atari 2600 Combat ■ **Alternatively** Acrophobia

THE FINEST GAMING FREEBIES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

CELEB

HI, I'M A GAME DEVELOPER

Name David Gaider, Bioware
Credits *Baldur's Gate II*, *Neverwinter Nights*, *Knights of the Old Republic*, Senior Writer and Designer: *Dragon Age*

My fave game: I'm playing *City of Heroes* right now... a pretty game. For fun, a couple of classics that I miss a lot, *X-COM: Apocalypse* and *Darklands*.

My fave mod: The last *Neverwinter* mod I played and enjoyed was *Bone Kenning 1: Art of the Thanaturge* by Wes Lewis. Great fun.

The thing I'm most looking forward to: Right now it's *The Sims 2*. One of these days someone will merge *The Sims* kind of gameplay with a fantasy RPG...

DOOM REVISITED

JDoom

Re-animating a PC gaming classic

Can't wait for *Doom 3*? You could always reminisce over *Doom*'s *1* and *2*... except that modern hardware can no longer cope with the *Doom* engine. Due to the continual process of software and hardware upgrades, a whole host of classic games refuse to cooperate with today's silicon. But thanks to the efforts of a dedicated group of id fans, *Doom*, and its associated games (*Doom 2*, *Final Doom* and *Heretic*) can now be enjoyed in glorious 3D rotato-enhanced vision.

DOWN LOADER
Restoring an Old Master (to your hard drive)

You'll need a copy of *Doom* (we've included the shareware version on the coverdisc), along with *jDoom*. *jDoom* is a 'wrapper', a piece of code that intercepts *Doom*'s magic code and reinterprets it into a language your 3D card will understand. When both have been installed, double click the 'Doomsday' icon on your desktop. Ignore most of the options on the terrifying-looking dialogue box and select 'Doom' (Shareware) from the drop-down menu in the WADS tab. Then, click Play. Within seconds you'll find yourself Knee Deep in the Dead.

jDoom also includes small tweaks that bring the game up to date. There's an option for mouselook, for instance, that suddenly brings the Phobos base to life. Dynamic lighting is included, so that fireballs and rockets light rooms with their blasts. A series of texture and model packs separately available (link below) also dust down *Doom*'s looks by replacing sprites with polygonal models. Beware: the sight of the old 'Pinky' skin texture, wrapped around a boxy model, may be enough to promote fresh nightmares.

PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

15Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.doomsdayhq.com
Discs	DVD and CD (Mods)
Requires	Doom, 3D card, Imp hatred
Still brutal, still perfect ten years on	

LET US SPEND YOUR BANDWIDTH

Use the Download Manager to aid modem digestion. Alternatively, find the month's best mods on the DVD.

BROADBAND BREEZE ‹ | › BROADBAND BREAKER

10Mb	50Mb	150Mb	1Gb
56k friendly	*Modem mare*	*Modem meltdown*	*Nightie night*

C&C GENERALS MOD

Zero Hour Reborn 4.0

Damn that Saddam

An augmented nuke: just one of the tweaks in *Zero Hour Reborn*.

Holding the bridge against infantry is far easier, thanks to increased armour.

DOWNLOADER C&C MOD

The current trend among strategy mod-makers is to 'retouch' a gaming classic. So-called 'balance packs' can rejuvenate a once stale game. The *C&C: Generals* community is investing heavily in such an approach, with dozens of amateur developers twisting the series into their own image. *Zero Hour Reborn* is a fine example as developer 'Nuker' has gone to great lengths to preserve the headlong melee and fast builds of the original game while applying his own tactical insights.

Realism tweaks include more effective tank shell detonations, a realistic clip size and ammunition complement for soldiers and vehicles, and a truly awe-inspiring nuclear detonation – replacing the wimpy fizzle we're used to.

Other explosive perks include briefcase bombs for the Chinese, C4 explosive packs for marines, and rear-mounted SAMs for the GLA.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

50Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	http://generals.filefront.com
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	Patched *C&C: Generals* and *Zero Hour*
Lock and reload: ***Generals* just got upgraded**	

BF 1942 MOD

Silent Heroes 0.35

Not one to blow its own trumpet

There's a strangely Scandinavian flavour to Downloader this month. Having tried on the snowboots of the Finnish Defence Forces, here's a chance to chafe your tender limbs in the fatigues of the Swedish and Norwegian military in a *Battlefield* mod.

Those evil Swedes have cashed-in on NATO's distractions in the Middle East and invaded Norway. This unlikely premise makes for two beautifully balanced opposing forces. Like most *Battlefield* mods, *Silent Heroes* sticks to the basic base-capturing 'Conquest' game type, but there's plenty of innovation elsewhere. The team have been painstaking in their efforts to tweak the modern-day weaponry on offer, and we just love the addition of smoke grenades that billow red and white clouds across the killing fields. Invade an enemy base, then let the smoke bombs fly to mask your numbers; take up sniping positions then wait for the other side to attack through the unearthly red mist. Atmospheric stuff.

Tanks: well known for their silent heroics.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

349Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.silentheroes.se
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	Patched version of *Battlefield 1942*
It gives Norwegians wood. Nuff said	

GAMING TOOLS

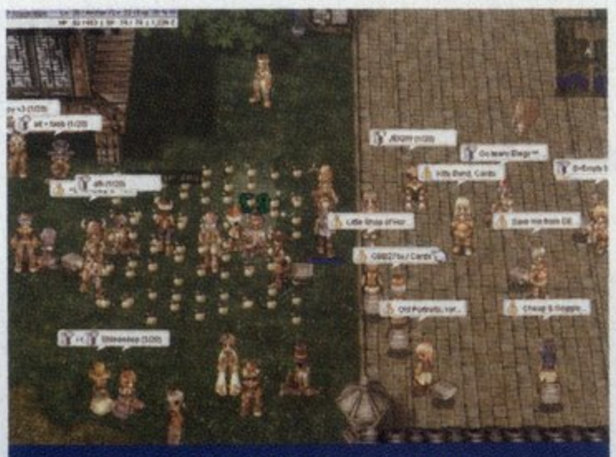
Benchmarkers

Performance checks for free

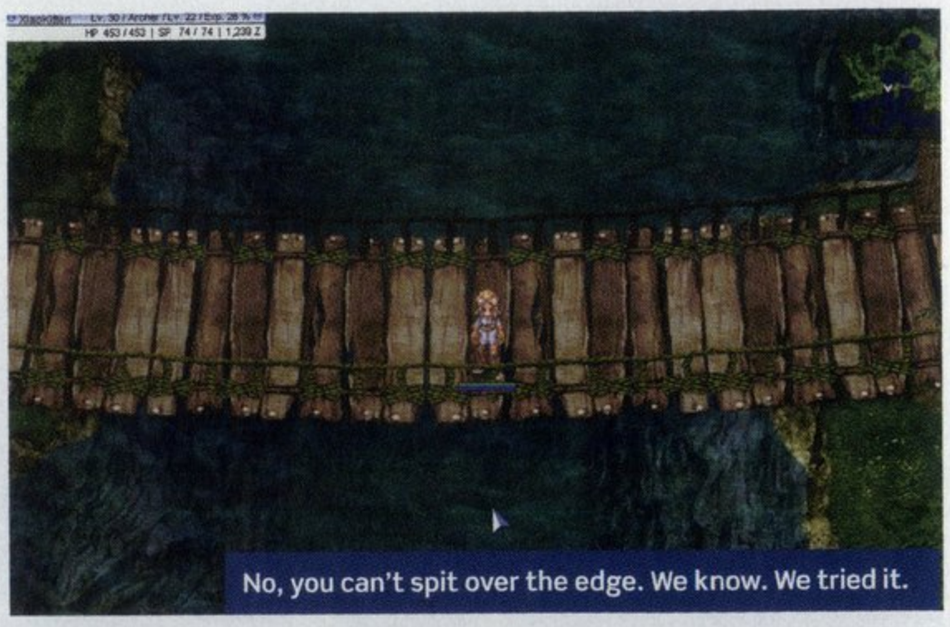
Ah, the baffling science of comparing one gaming PC to another. It goes well beyond who's got the biggest graphics card (although that certainly helps) as there's all kind of tweakery that can make one PC outperform another. But before you can think about that or upgrading you've got to assess your PC's performance. That's going to cost you though, right? Nope. Not at all. It's been a while now since developers started conveniently 'forgetting' to remove the performance-checking code that they put in their games to measure the framerate on different systems. This means you can now find a wide choice of free benchmarking tools out there. Here's our selection of some of the best around, all of which can be found on your DVD.

GAME	BENCHMARK
X2: THE THREAT	This rolling demo acted as a sneak preview of Egosoft's sequel while giving your PC a thorough workout. Still a favourite in the office when it comes to assessing the latest graphics card, the demo includes a host of options. www.egosoft.com
GUN METAL	An early DirectX 9 benchmark, this rolling demo includes two tests from Yeti Studios' transformer shooter. You can get a more thorough breakdown by checking out the .htm files produced in the demo's main directory. www.yetistudios.com
UT 2003	Just run any of the batch files in the benchmark folder for flybys and botmatches over the Antalus, Asbestos and Citadel maps. *UT2003* is a widely-used 3D engine, and this gives it a comprehensive workout. www.unrealtournament.com
FINAL FANTASY XI	The online RPG is about to be published in Australia so now's a good time to fire up this rolling demo to see how your PC will cope with the load. Endure some sickeningly cute creatures and you'll have a 4 figure score for your PC. www.playonline.com/ff11us
SERIOUS SAM	This popular benchmark is a tad tricky to set up. You need to bring down the console in the menu by pressing F1 then type dem_bProfile=1. You can then run any of the four demo levels. Bring the console back to get your framerates. www.serioussam.com/se

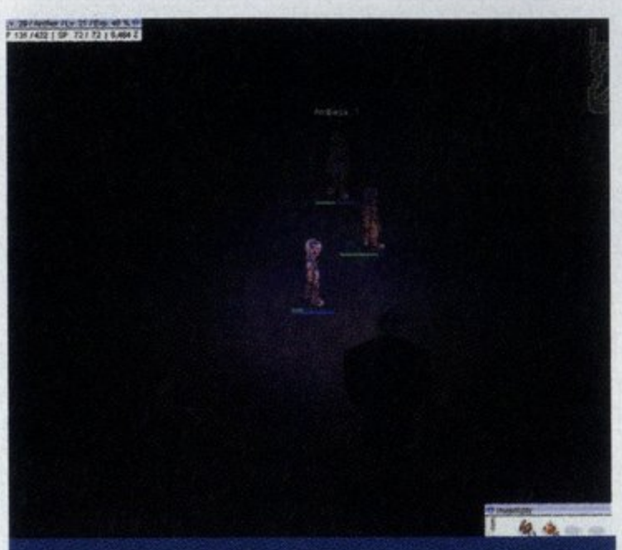
Social etiquette in MMORPGs is easy going. Nobody minds if you have gas here...



You'll pass through a lot of areas where players just sit around selling stuff. Great virtual markets, but watch out for lag.



No, you can't spit over the edge. We know. We tried it.



No, the server power isn't low, it's just a case of night-time.

The shops can be a good place to meet up with people. And buy stuff.

Piggies and vultures and skeletons. Do they arrive in that order?

Ragnarok Online

Gotterdammerüng this, baby!

Your MMORPG is a strange beast. Created as a means to bring gaming into a social arena, it calls together people from all over the world in a place where all the usual rules don't seem to apply. Naturally, people being what they are, the concept doesn't work quite as well as it should; the degree of relative anonymity provided by a tag and avatar makes some think that they can get away with the most appalling behaviour imaginable. Then there are others that are like your personal saviour or guardian angel. Whether it's this spread of personality types, the endless escapism, or a combination of both that make the MMORPG so popular is irrelevant here and now; what matters is *Ragnarok Online* is a reason in itself to jump online and take a quick squiz. More importantly, *Ragnarok Online* servers have, until now, all been based overseas, but now OnGameNet are launching Australian servers. If you're questioning the size of the following or the raw amount of stuff within the game, head to www.gamefaqs.com and gape at the sheer volumes of stuff.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with *Ragnarok Online*, it's based on the Korean fantasy comic *Ragnarok* by Myung-Jin Lee. There's a bit more back story, but that's about all you need to know to get started.

If you've played an RPGs before, you'll recognise the usual elements. You have HP, MP, a system of leveling up your character through combat, and a need for gazillions of units of game currency to purchase any worthwhile items. Thus if you are curious, persevere as it can be pretty tough to get going. Initially, the leveling up can be quite arduous if you're going it alone, and the user interface requires some toying with to understand and exploit fully.

So, why play? Well, there are countless people playing, there's loads of established FAQs to sift through, teaching you what you need (or want) to know without having to find a comrade within the game. Once you get the hang of the interface, you'll be wheeling, dealing, emoting and of course hacking your way throughout the anime-inspired landscapes of Rune Midgard.

ON THE DISC Confused? It's the 2nd CD this issue. Of course DVD owners will find the installer in > Demos

Ragnarok Online is undoubtedly one of the more stylised MMORPGs out there, with a distinctive, super-deformed anime look that denotes *Ragnarok* as the 'cutest' game of its kind. A far cry from most Western MMORPGs, that like to pretend they look dark and serious.

Your best bet, initially, is to take the job the game recommends to you. Once you have a bit more experience, make a new character, and go with whatever suits you best. The initial jobs are a bit limited, but a dash of patience and it all becomes more interesting.

Go. Have fun. You'll like it. But please, for the love of God, don't go around emoting kisses at girls you've only just met. We find it kinda creepy.

MICHELLE STARR

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

DATA FLOW

Link	www.ragnarokonline.com.au
Discs?	DVD and CD2

Worth a play for sure, but it's hardly a *Quake* replacement, and miles behind *UT2004*,

■ **Publisher** OnGameNet ■ **Developer** Gravity Corp ■ **Requires** 500Mhz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 8Mb video card, 700Mb HD space ■ **Link** iro.ragnarokonline.com/community ■ **Community** iro.ragnarokonline.com/community ■ **Influenced by** Everquest, Ultima Online, Ragnarok comics

Neverwinter Nights Mods

There be dragons in those dungeons

Hard though it is to credit, *Neverwinter Nights* is the fifth most-played online PC game. In an arena dominated by noisy FPSs and twitch-happy RTS games, Bioware's mix 'n' match RPG offers a refined alternative. And thanks to the developers' inspired bundling of a tile-based editor and a simple scripting language, RPG-ers have a feast of user-created modules to play through. There's a vast amount of pre-created content available, freeing designers to get on with the important stuff. Here are five of our favourite *Winter* tales, available online at **nwvault.ign .com**.

Where the expansion packs *Hordes of the Underdark* or *Shadows of Undrentide* are required to play the module, we've noted it in the details.

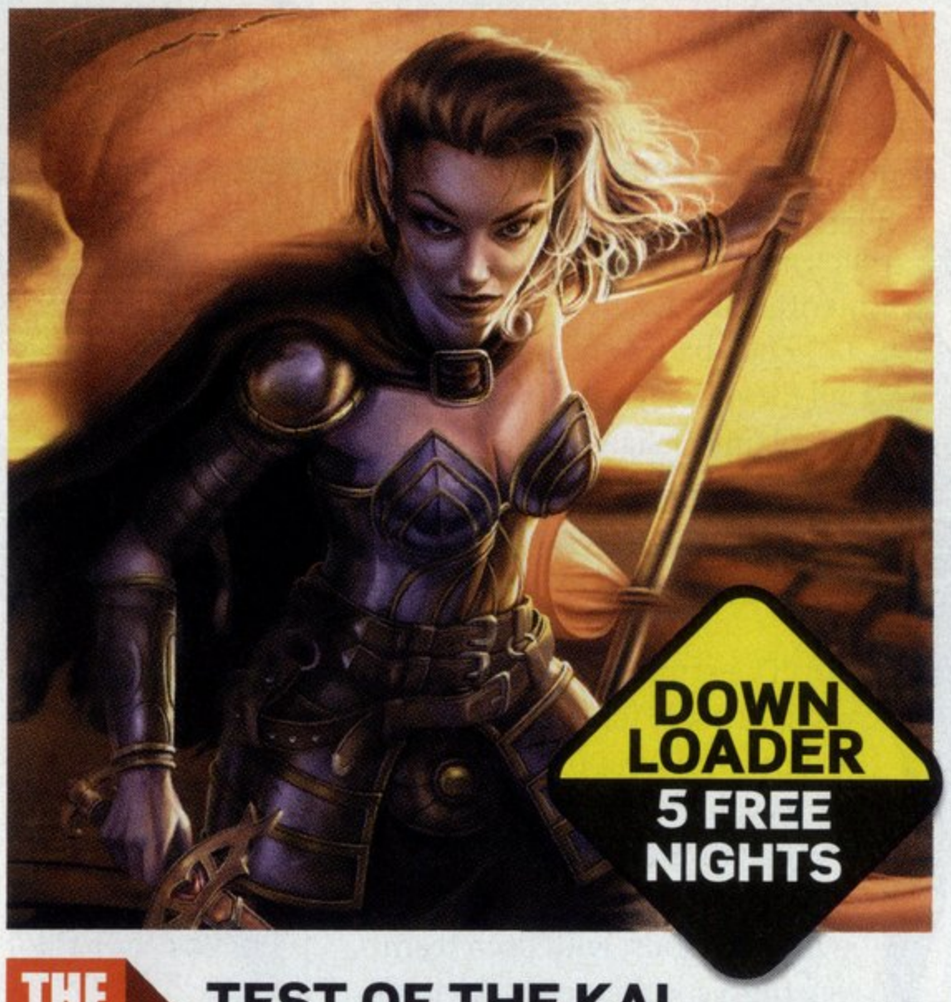
TIM EDWARDS

ON THE DISC All these modules, along with a couple of high quality also-rans > Mods

THE WANDERER

■ **By** BGP Hughes ■ **Expansions** HotU and SoU
■ **Players** Multiplayer (up to six)

Is 'Adventuring' a viable career? Can you *really* carve out a living from rat bashing and locating ancient manuscripts? This module attempts to answer that question. You play a travelling troubleshooter, new to the freshly built town of Mithri. Money's tight, so to survive you're going to have to start earning. Got yourself some equipment? Right, then you can begin by clearing the encroaching forest of beasties...



THE BEST!

TEST OF THE KAI

■ **By** Altaris ■ **Expansion** None
■ **Players** Singleplayer

Altaris' mod demonstrates just how useful a restricted setting can be. You play a 'Kai Initiate', sent to study the ways of the Sun God at a monastery. Sound familiar? It should. It's based around the Lone Wolf series of books written in the '80s. Here, all manner of schoolroom drama is played out, from class romance to crucial sports events. Think Harry Potter, but with enormous swords, and more sneaking into the girls dormitories for a cuddle after lights out.

A HUNT IN THE DARK

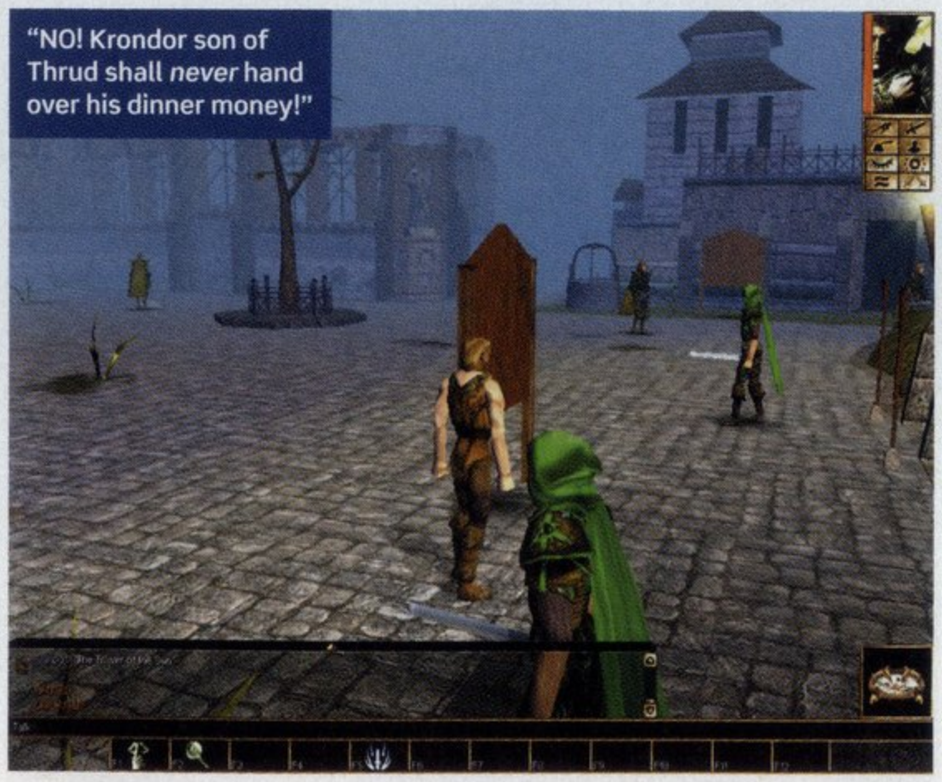
■ **By** Markus Schlegel ■ **Expansions** HotU and SoU
■ **Players** Singleplayer

This tale demonstrates the breadth of imagination present in the *Neverwinter Nights* community. Rather than playing as a travelling wanderer, in this module you take on the role of a Dark Elf, sent underground to gather human slaves. Ooh, playing the bad guy for a change. Our favourite scene? The moment when you turn the tables on a group of supposedly 'heroic' adventurers. Bash 'em upside the head. Bash 'em all.

HONOUR AMONG THIEVES

■ **By** Baldecaran ■ **Expansions** None
■ **Players** Singleplayer

The Hopping Hobgoblin Inn is your first port of call in this extended jaunt through a bustling city. Temptation is everywhere, as this module has been designed from the ground up as a haven for light-fingered rogues. Pickpocket, pillage and plunder to your heart's content. We commend this one for the fine detail in the scripting, and the marvellous extended series of endings.



THE HORNS OF CRAVEN

■ **By** Lady Oonagh & Lord Alex ■ **Expansion** HotU and SoU ■ **Players** Multiplayer up to 3

Up to three players can take part in this husband-and-wife designed effort that shares a storyline and setting with the *Baldur's Gate* games. This module is built to tell a story, not to provide simple hack 'n' slash thrills, and the attention to setting and detail shines through. Check out the introduction, which features custom music by an authentic Celtic-type band.

START-UP >

1. Update *Neverwinter* to the latest version by running the included patching utility.
2. Copy the mod to your desktop, and open the file using Winzip or a similar extractor.
3. Each mod requires a different method of install, so check the included readme files.
4. Place .mod and .hak files in the appropriate folder of Neverwinter nights\nwn. Play!

UT2004

NightBlade

Lock up your valuables, there's a *Thief* among us

Multiplayer *Thief*, that holy grail for so many Garrett fans, already exists. It's called *Thievery*, an under-appreciated mod for *Unreal Tournament* created by Blackcat Games, the same chaps responsible for the sublime ET-busting *Alien Swarm*. With that project finished, Blackcat are returning to their roots creating a sequel, of sorts, to *Thievery – NightBlade*.

According to Dalia, *NightBlade*'s project lead, "As in *Thievery*, *NightBlade* will feature a team of guards and a team of thieves working against one another. However, being a guard will be a lot more interesting than before, thanks to the new third team, a group of mystical, chaotic spirits known as Shades."

Back up a bit. In *Thievery*, players were split into two teams: the thieves and the guards. Naturally the guards had to protect stashes of loot, while the Thieves had to sneak into the buildings and pinch it from under their noses. It was a slow, tactical FPS. That put some players off – who wants to join a server only to wander a dank castle as a cannon fodder guard, acting as a pincushion for a wily thief? Enter the Shades.

"The Shades are out to retrieve all the pieces of the NightBlade," explains Dalia, "to use in their nefarious rituals. With terror and chaos as tools, they have to feed on living creatures to sustain themselves. These pieces of the NightBlade (an ancient, powerful weapon) are regarded as valuable antiques by both the thieves and guards. This creates a three-way battle over the goods, with each team having a specific set of strengths and weaknesses."

MOD NEWS

Multiplayer medieval burglary, featuring three teams

Such as? "The thieves are their traditional, stealth-oriented selves, focusing on staying unseen and escaping effectively when it all goes wrong," says Dalia. "They can also exploit the relationship between the two opposing teams for their own advantage, giving them yet another outlet for their sneakiness.

"As in *Thievery*, the guards have a number of traps and weapons at their disposal to protect the valuables, including holy symbols to ward off evil spirits. And the Shades can perform fearsome magic based off the lifeblood of their victims."

For those of us who have just finished *Thief: Deadly Shadows*, multiplayer *NightBlade* can't arrive soon enough.

PC GAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Multiplayer
Link www.night-blade.com
Percentage complete 40%

NightBlade is set in a dark, mistrusting medieval world where the shadows are thick with thieves and cut-throats.

New player physics enable you to mantle up ledges and lean around corners, which makes hiding or attacking that much more effective.

NightBlade features new and detailed medieval-themed maps and meshes.

Can *Homeworld 2* re-create the whole Babylon 5 series as this mod plans? You'll have to wait a while to find out.

MOD NEWS
HW2 MEET B5

HOMEWORLD 2

Babylon 5

We like a mod with a well-stocked Minbari

Homeworld was a game that fired the mod maker's imagination. Sadly, thanks to the clunky toolset, most of the starry-eyed projects spawned half a dozen drawings of Cylons and nothing more.

The *Babylon 5* mod series was an exception. The four *Great Wars* mods captured some of the bitter conflicts and awe-inspiring weaponry from the TV series. They showed just what could be done with the original *Homeworld* toybox and they're now a benchmark for what can be achieved with its sequel.

Homeworld 2's *Babylon 5* mod, like its predecessor, will be a total conversion of Relic's engine. Typically, it will be even more ambitious. "We intend to replace every single ship in the original until we have examples from all the major races," explains mod maker, Steve Pike. "I imagine that there will be over 100 different ships in the finished game".

Aside from the benefits of higher poly counts, the major difference with the sequel's mod is that the team will be able to craft a single-player game with their own storyline rather than edit Relic's own structured single-player campaign.

"Our ultimate goal would be to recreate the storyline of B5 as we saw in the show's five-year run," claims Pike. "Early missions would include the

Firing shots and imaginations: Babylon 5.

Minbari war, fighting raiders, then to the Narn/Centauri war and the introduction of the Shadows, the Shadow/Vorlon war and then the Earth Civil War and beyond to the ISA years with the Drakh," he adds.

Don't expect anything too soon though – we could have quite a lengthy wait for such an opus. The original works took over a year to construct and the team have had to develop their own toolset to help them get this far.

So while you're waiting, we command that you dust off that copy of *Homeworld* and investigate your DVD where you'll find all four of the *Great War* levels safely tucked away in the mods section.

PC GAMES README

DATA FLOW

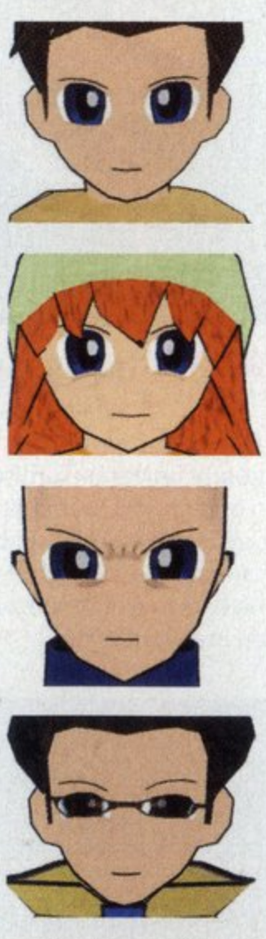
Type Single and multiplayer
Link www.b5mods.com
Percentage complete 15%

HEY, SEEN SULLIE AROUND?
NOPE, DON'T REALLY CARE EITHER, SHES REALLY MEAN
REALLY? NA MAN SULLIE IS AS SOFT AS A FEATHER
YOUR OPINION
!STRIKE!
STRIP CREATED BY: IAN
.. SO THE CHEESE WAS EVERYWHERE ..
HEY KYLE
HEY
DID HE GET A HAIR CUT OR SOMETHING?
HE DEFINATLY HAD SOMETHING ON HIS TEETH

QUAKE 3

Seasons Forever

A command of conkers



Put down that AK47 and reach for your vinegar-soaked 29'er – conker fighting is coming to *Quake 3*. It's just one element of this unique, multi-part mod based on the four seasons.

The mod team are currently working on the winter games, a snowball-fighting deathmatch mod which should be released to coincide with the one year anniversary of the project. It will be followed by a summer chapter featuring water bomb fights, a spring mod incorporating lawn mowers and Easter eggs and the much anticipated autumn conker fest – an ambitious Pokemon-style RPG mod.

Boasting charming cell-shaded cartoon characters based on mod team members, *Seasons Forever* is easy on both the eye and the soul.

PC GAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Multiplayer
Link www.seasonsforever.com
Percentage complete 30%

DUNGEON SIEGE

ULTIMA V: LAZARUS

Although it's technically a mod for the excellent action-RPG *Dungeon Siege*, *Lazarus* has somewhat grander ambitions than chucking a few goblins in a cave. It's a complete remake of the venerable *Ultima V*, one of the best examples of the long-running and highly influential RPG series.

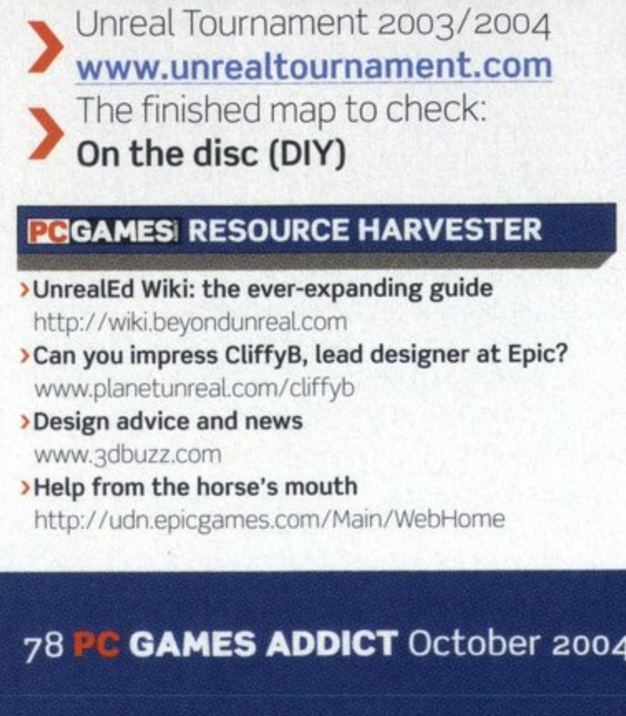
Resurrecting *Ultima V* with comparatively modern technology is a mammoth undertaking. The original was on 2D tile graphics and contained reams of dialogue. But *Dungeon Siege*'s streamlined interface and control system is an ideal canvas for the *Lazarus* team. Thus far, they've reached alpha stage with the demo version, which can be found at www.u5lazarus.com; head there to learn more about this ambitious project to breathe new live into a touchstone of '80s roleplaying.

How to create your first level with the *Unreal* Editor

BY RICHARD COBBETT

D-I-Y

Learn to use the most popular level editor on the planet



WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

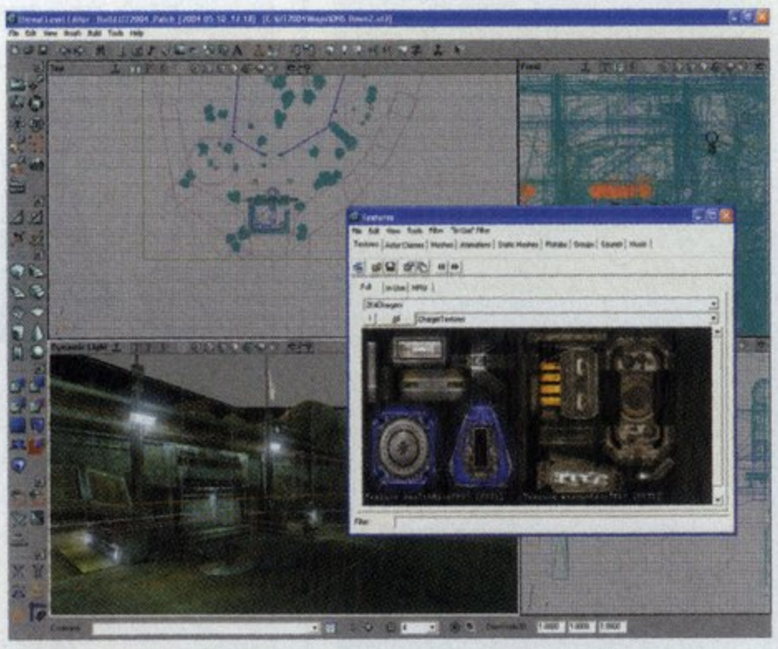
Skill Easy
Time About 1 hour

WHAT WILL I NEED?

- Unreal Tournament 2003/2004 www.unrealtournament.com
- The finished map to check: **On the disc (DIY)**

PCGAMES RESOURCE HARVESTER

- **UnrealEd Wiki: the ever-expanding guide** http://wiki.beyondunreal.com
- **Can you impress CliffyB, lead designer at Epic?** www.planetunreal.com/cliffyb
- **Design advice and news** www.3dbuzz.com
- **Help from the horse's mouth** http://udn.epicgames.com/Main/WebHome

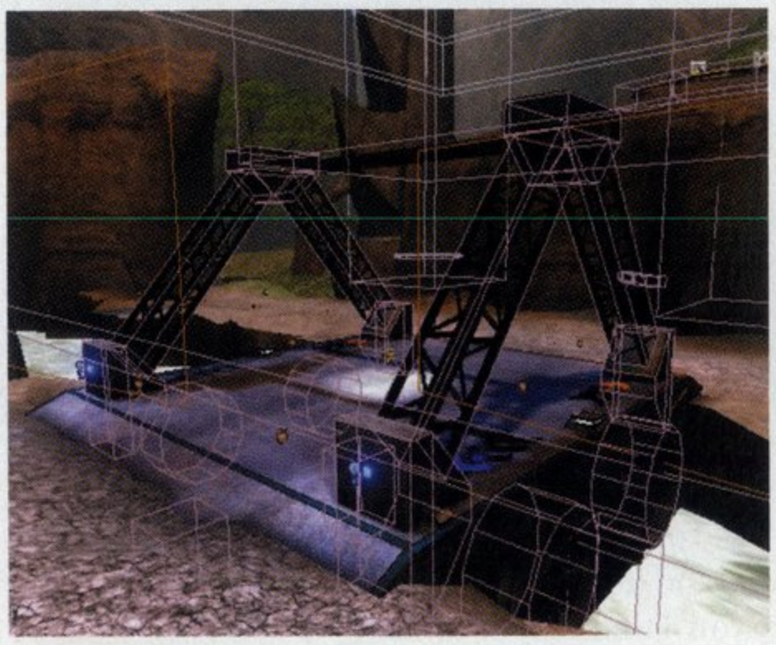


01 DEADLY JIGSAW PUZZLES

Think of UnrealEd as a mix between a spade and a jigsaw puzzle. You start by digging out some space to play with, then go back and click together the bits and pieces you need. The controls are spread all over the screen – world interaction and object creation on the left, with textures, actors and all the other essential components available via their own screens. Knowing how to build a level is a matter of knowing how all these pieces click together.

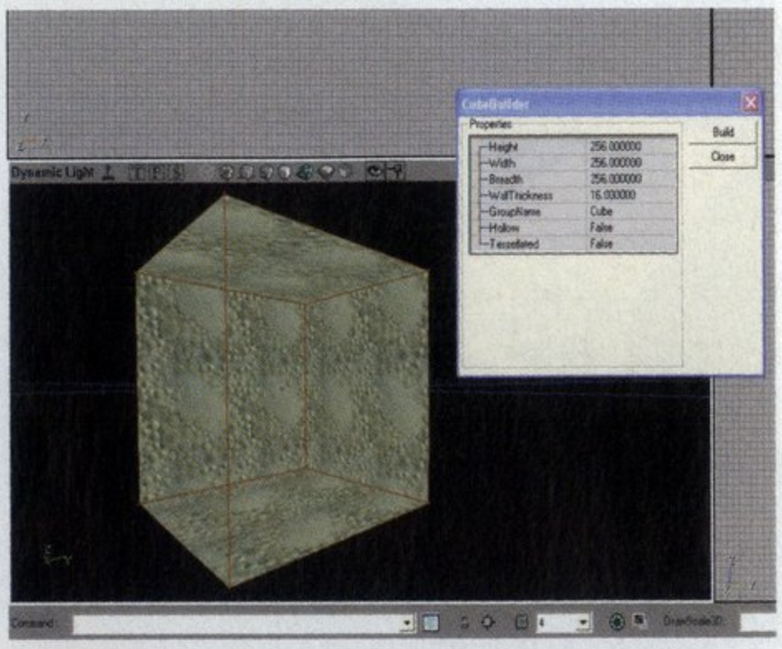
03 MAKING A MOVE

While the world may be three-dimensional, your screen isn't – you'll have to use multiple panes to get any universe-furniture into the correct position. To move an object, you select it with the mouse, and drag while holding specific keys. Ctrl and the left mouse button control movement, Ctrl and the right mouse button handle rotation. The axis in which this works depends on the viewing pane that you are working in.



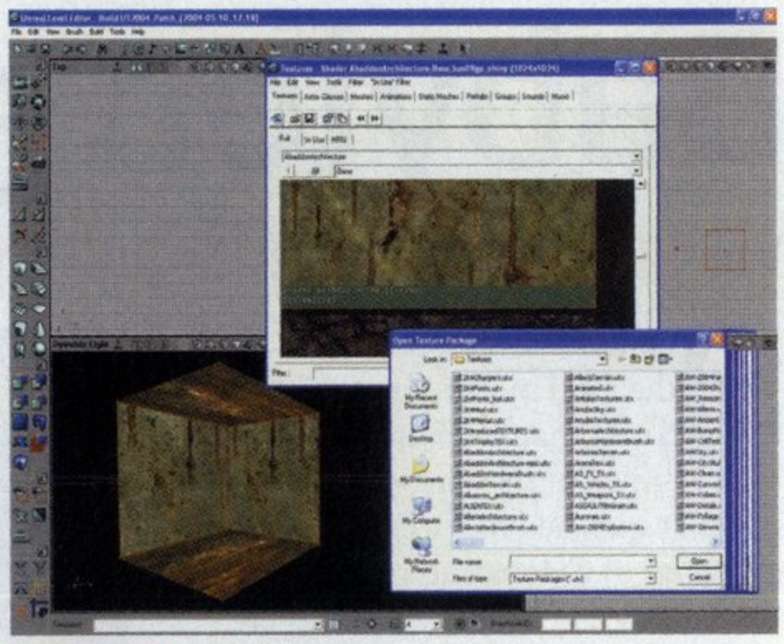
05 JUST MESHING ABOUT A BIT

Believe it or not, that's the hardest part over. Rather than trying to make everything from bridges to spaceships using primitives, *Unreal* uses 'Static Meshes'. Anything you've seen in the full game, such as this bridge, is available for use in your own levels. They all come pre-textured and ready to go – and can easily be twisted and edited for your own purposes. *Unreal* displays them blazingly quickly, and it doesn't matter if they prod through walls etc.



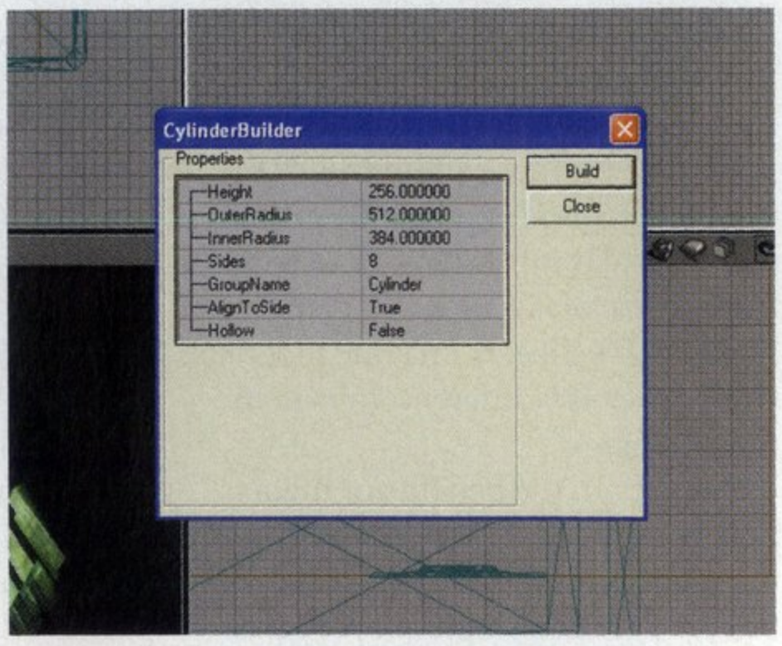
02 PRIMITIVE LATHE FORMS

Every map is effectively a large block of nothingness. To begin building rooms, we select a 'primitive' object – a cube, sphere, cylinder or other – and 'carve' it out using the Subtract button on the left-hand tools palette. Don't get too caught up with this method of working – the overwhelming majority of *Unreal* modders these days simply hollow out a large area and 'add' the necessary bits and pieces in the middle. Happily, lots of this comes in kit form.



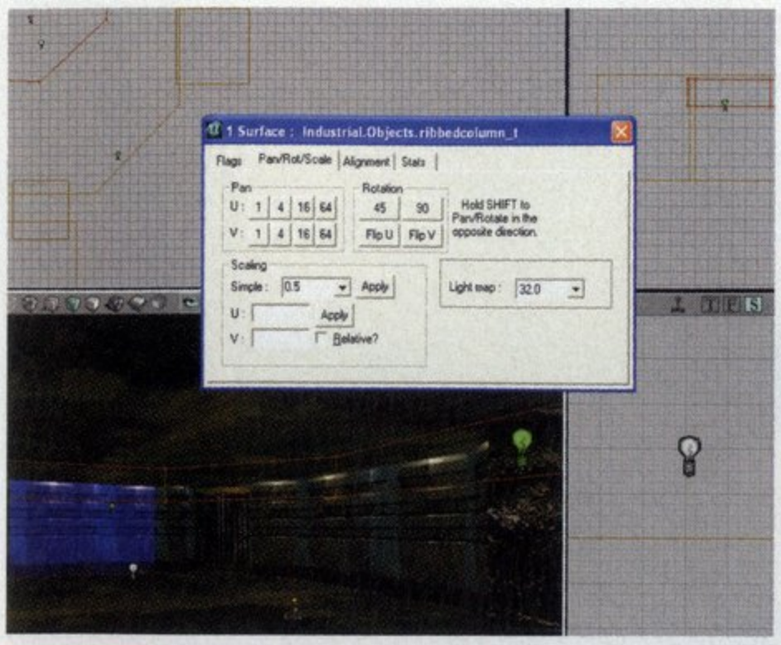
04 PAINTING BY NUMBNESS

By default, a primitive is assigned a bland texture. Open the Texture browser from the top menus, followed by Open and the name of a texture pack. You'll have to dig around to get a feel for which textures are in each collection, although knowing the style of *Unreal*'s levels will help immeasurably. Inferno, for example, is a dark, brooding land of fire. Click on each of the primitive's panels in turn, followed by a texture. Don't worry if they don't fit.



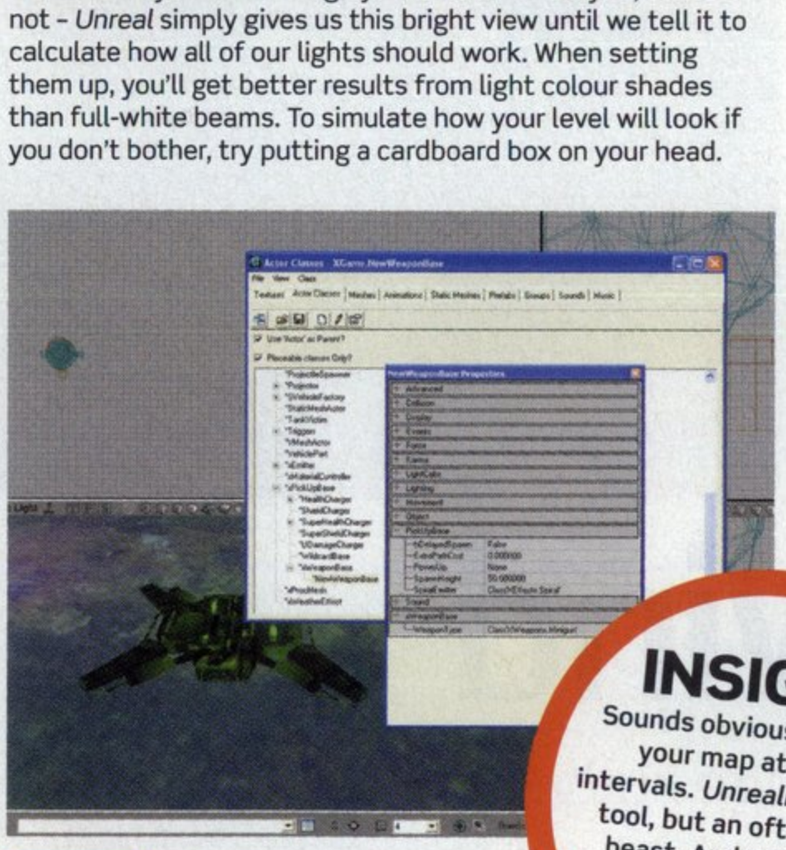
06 SIZE IS NOT IMPORTANT

Our level will be more of a room than anything else – although the proper term is 'compact arena'. 'Very compact arena' to be more exact. It'll be about the simplest possible *Unreal* level – a bit of territory to fight over, a single decent weapon, and a couple of decorations to help jazz things up a bit. To begin with, carve out the main cylinder using the same Primitive tools we used earlier. Give your cylinder a decent radius – around 512 units should do it.



07 TEXTURE LIKE SUN

We're going to use some of the wall textures from the Industrial set – open up the collection and browse the 'Objects' category. Select 'ribbedcolumn_t'. By default, they'll be much, much too large and make your level look like a mess. To fix this, right-click on each wall in turn, selecting 'Surface Properties' and the 'Pan/Rot/Scale' tab. Try scaling them to 0.5 of their current size, then shunting them into place using the U (horizontal) and V (vertical) buttons.

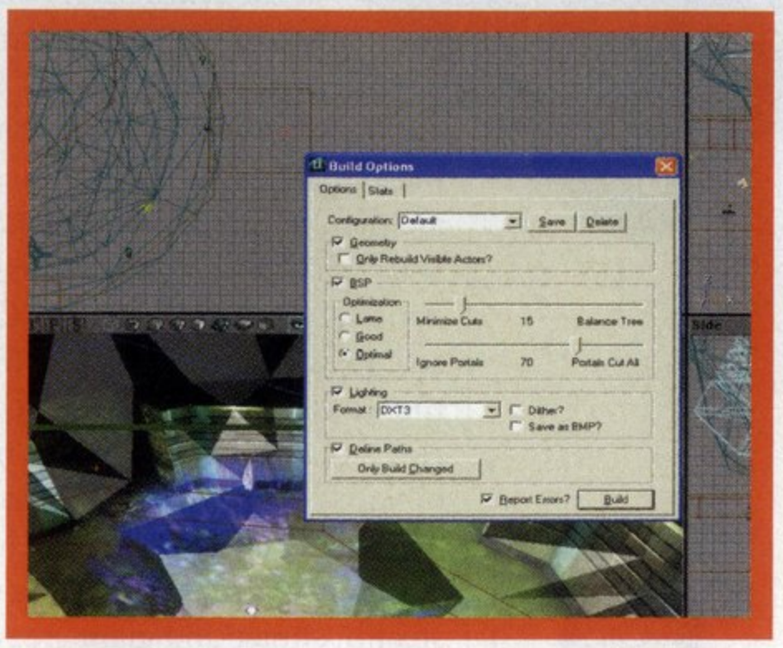


08 SECRETS OF THE ILLUMINATI

Lights work in the same way, with a few more properties to play with – such as colour and radius. It may look as though your level is already lit, but it's not – *Unreal* simply gives us this bright view until we tell it to calculate how all of our lights should work. When setting them up, you'll get better results from light colour shades than full-white beams. To simulate how your level will look if you don't bother, try putting a cardboard box on your head.

09 SPAWN FREE

The final key component is a place for the player to start. We've only put one into this test level for the sake of simplicity, although in a full map you'll need several (otherwise everyone will repeatedly telefrag each other the split-second they respawn). To add a new point, right click on the ground and choose Add Player Start Here. Make sure it's on a solid surface and won't leave anyone who spawns there trapped in the ceiling.

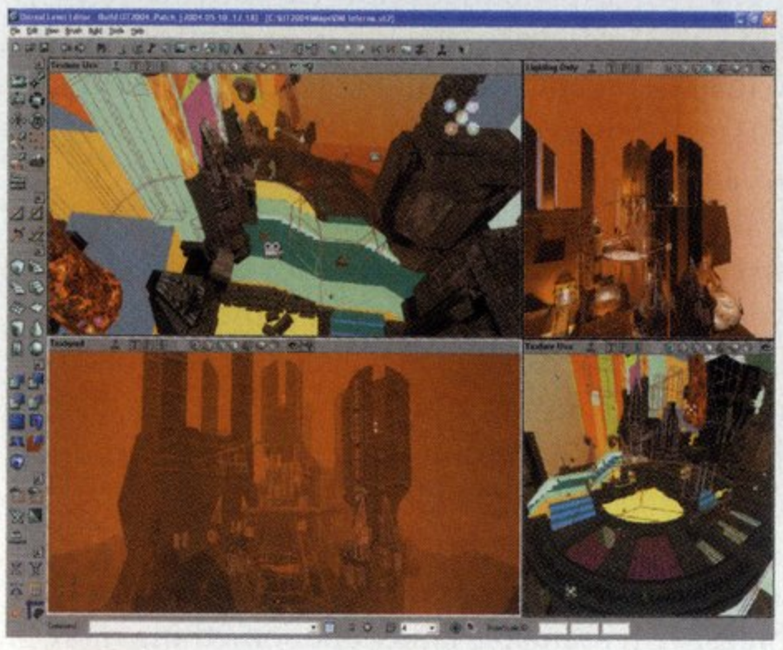


10 HAPPINESS IS A...

In *UT2004*, guns are provided by dedicated spawning platforms. Open up the Actor Browser and scroll down to 'xPickUpBase'. From this, select 'xWeaponBase' followed by 'NewWeaponBase'. Now, right-click wherever on the map you want it to go, and select 'Add NewWeaponBase Here'. Right click on it and bring up its Properties, scroll down to xWeaponBase and choose a gun.

INSIGHT

Sounds obvious, but: save your map at regular intervals. *UnrealEd* is a great tool, but an often finicky beast. And map files are easily corrupted, especially during the build stage.



11 PIE IN THE SKYBOX

The complexity soon ramps up – you won't be making anything like Inferno in a hurry. However, no individual piece of the gunslinging jigsaw puzzle is especially hard – even a blazing, animated sky like this one is easy to put together, simply by dropping an object denoting 'Skybox Zone' into a box and slapping the appropriate textures on the side. The trick, and why we've been visiting these other arenas, is to see how the overall map should turn out.

12 INTERIOR DESIGN, 2453AD

For now, however, it's fine to simply carve out random rooms and experiment with the different tools and meshes. Our arena was looking a bit drab, so we dug into the Static Mesh collection and pulled out a stylish crystal to go into the ceiling. Ready to play? Select Build All from the Tools menu, then Play Level to load up the game. Run around. Rinse and repeat, practising on a few simple designs, then try creating your own level based on a proper sketch.

Design Law Debunked

Not a rule "Actions should have obvious consequences"

Dave Morris is lead designer at Elixir

What caused the war? Saddam? The French? Western governments failing to finish the job in 1991? Or was it all decided way back, when one group of people turned right out of Africa and the other lot headed north?

Game designers prefer that an action should have an immediate consequence.

Having actions cross-connect to distant consequences makes it harder to maintain the design. When an action only has a instant payoff, you have a game in hermetic compartments. So it's unsinkable, like the – er – Titantic.

You also don't want to force the player to backtrack because a decision he took hours ago made the game unwinnable. I blast the devastator gun off into the distance and hear a satisfying explosion. Half an hour later, I reach a bridge that I need to cross. Except some bloody fool has blown it up.

It's a fair point but it only applies to make-or-break consequences. If there are other ways to win the level, it won't matter.

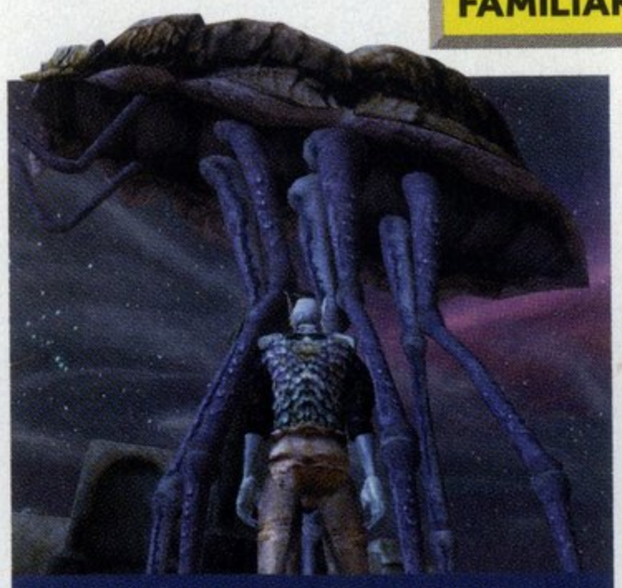
Lastly there's the fear you might win the level the 'wrong' way. At the end of the level I walk past a huge ruined turret, only later discovering that turret was the big boss – who I unwittingly blew up from half a mile away with the devastator gun because a level designer left a single one-in-a-million line of sight across the whole level.

It's not always possible to control consequences in that old Boolean way anymore. Game environments are becoming increasingly complex, so consequences are more often emergent than designed-in. If players can find clever solutions with what you've given them, that also implies they'll sometimes screw it up to make a problem unsolvable. This may require a new way of thinking about design. But that's what we're here for.

■ **This design column regularly appears in game development trade journal Develop**

Want to write a mod tutorial for PC GAMES ADDICT? Then contact:

dan@derwenthoward.com.au



These gigantic insects offer speedy travel around *Morrowind*. This is the number 37a to Molag Mar – no smoking.

The ceremonial armour of right-wing House Redoran, crafted specially to scare the bejesus out of foreigners.

The high elves are an ancient and dignified race, but never, *ever* insult their mothers.

Morrowind

Total freedom and a huge fully-explorable world – it's *GTA* with cat-people

RPGs often have an uphill struggle to win over newcomers. Their worlds are bursting with characters and plots that put whole genres to shame, but to discover such delights you've usually got to accept an isometric perspective, turn-based combat and a whole party of characters over whom you have little direct control.

Morrowind is free from these genre peculiarities (it's first-person, real-time and you control just one character) and the impact of those design decisions runs much deeper than mere accessibility. Other RPGs ask you to imagine most of the action: this computerised dice roll says that fireball missed, so imagine you didn't just see it smack straight into your character. In *Morrowind* the fireball missed because you dived off a rock to avoid it – or else it hits because you weren't quick enough. Similarly, the most beautifully drawn, top-down environments can't compare to the effortless immersion achieved by *Morrowind*'s intuitive first-person perspective.

LONG PLAY

Got a spare lifetime? Here's the game you should spend it on

The format, though, is just a catalyst for how quickly, deeply and lastingly you can be sucked into *Morrowind*. The substance is in the seemingly infinite number of quests, and their entirely voluntary nature. You start incarcerated aboard a prison ship, and are then released on the island of the Dark Elves with a package to deliver to a mystery name. If you like. Or you can sell the package to the local trader, rob the Census and Excise Office blind, ride a crazy giant insect to a major city of your choice and sign up to the Thieves' Guild. And therein lie three of *Morrowind*'s most appealing oddities: stealth, choice and giant crazy things.

The giant crazy things are what mark the game out atmospherically from any other, even previous *Elder Scrolls* games. The first sound you're likely to hear as you step onto the jetty at the sleepy fishing village of Seyda Neen is a bizarre alien moan, something like a distant elephant in distress. A quick glance around reveals a kind of enormous chitinous tick, standing in the shallow water on legs taller than most buildings. Talk to its owner – standing on a specially raised platform to facilitate mounting – and he'll explain that a hole cut into the carapace allows him to control the giant crazy thing by skillfully tweaking nerve endings.

Wander along the Bitter Coast for a while and the gentle inland hills will give way to a sparse forest of giant crazy mushrooms. Further north, in the ash-storm plagued steppes of volcanic Mount Kand, the posh district of Ald'Ruhn is contained entirely within the football-pitch-size, hollowed-out carapace of a giant, crazy long-dead crab. It gives the endlessly roamable landscape something more than its obvious beauty – a sublime, surreal quality that lingers in your mind even when you stop playing.

Which could be a good eight hours after you start. In such a rich world of sub-cultures, political factions, guilds and even drug-trafficking crime

Played by
Dan Toose
Played For
Two years

Want to see a classic game revisited in PC GAMES ADDICT? Mail us at to:
dan@derwenthoward.com.au

The Ordinators are the capital city cops, and – like the Met – they're tough, scary and worship the Goddess Almalexia.

This is Daedric armour, forged in hell and worn by demons. That's a dagger that just isn't going to cut it.

The cat-people are brilliant at sneaking around and stabbing things, thanks to padded feet and a seething inner hatred.

syndicates – all wanting something from you, if they trust you enough to ask for it – it's easy to have so much on your plate that you forget you even have a real life. It's enormous fun, but the real joy is the freedom to decide which avenues to pursue, right down to ignoring the main story arc completely. You can create a cat-woman assassin character and make it your mission to seek out the elusive Assassin's Guild, prove your worth to get in, rise through the ranks and become Guild Master. It'll take about as long as your average FPS does to play through, and yet in the context of *Morrowind* it's just a tiny side project, an idea to try.

Speaking of assassins, cat-people and other stealthy folk, this is something of an RPG novelty. Yes, we have medieval sneaking in *Thief*, but it's wonderful to see it incorporated in a similar way into an expansive RPG. Many quests that otherwise involve talking, bribing or killing someone for that all-important key can also be solved by pickpocketing if you have a decent Sneak skill. But your only judge of that is a gut feeling, and combined with complications like waiting for guards to look the other way, the tension is unbearable.

If you do want to kill someone, you can also use the silent arts for an extra-damaging surprise attack, enabling a sly cat with nothing but a dagger to take down beefy Orc warriors. Best of all, you don't get better at your stealthy skills by levelling up from killing monsters: you get better at them by using them a lot. Just as you get better with a sword by hacking with one, or at a given magic discipline by practising it. Levelling up is an almost invisible process of organic evolution, as your character naturally improves to meet the relative requirements of your playing style.

A giant, crazy, long-dead crab

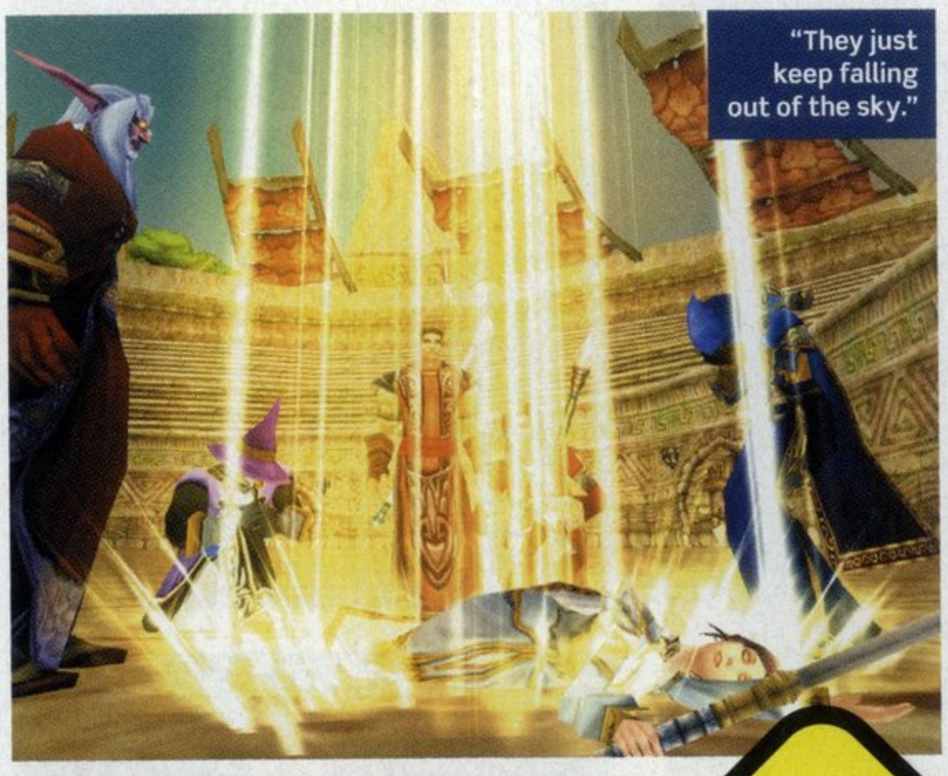
Morrowind was technologically ahead of its time when it was released two years ago, and it comes from a lineage of RPGs that have always made their contemporaries look old. It's only now that the average gamer's machine can breeze over the loading times and really bring the gorgeous world to life without faltering. The slew of panacean patches have hastened its performance even further and eliminated initial stability issues. Then there are the four *thousand* mods the community has come up with using the brilliant editing suite included with the game – the best of them are all on the discs. All this streamlining is particularly important for a game which benefits from a relaxed state of mind, so round about now is actually the perfect time to get into *Morrowind*. Not to mention that all this can now be yours at a budget price (which will vary from store to store). If you really want the works, we advise you go grab the GOTY version which comes with the two expansion packs.

PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

First review	PCGA 2, 83%
Why now?	Modern PCs make it better than ever
The RPG writ large – big, beautiful and more immersive than the Pacific	

■ **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** Bethesda Softworks ■ **Requires** 500Mhz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb D3D video card, 1Gb hard disk space ■ **Link** www.morrowind.com
■ **Community** www.rpgplanet.com/morrowind ■ **Influenced by** Ultima Underworld, TES: Arena, TES: Daggerfall ■ **Spiritual successor** World of Warcraft, potentially STALKER



CULTURE

World of Warcraft players make a bid for power

AUCTIONEERING

Highest bidder

Gamers will do anything for a golden ticket

As Blizzard prepare for the launch of their MMORPG *World of Warcraft*, places on the 'closed' beta-test have been handed out to testers selected at random from the thousands of applicants. Those who've missed out have taken to purchasing authentication keys from those with no use for them through eBay auctions: prices at the time of writing hold at around $450 per key.

Why are gamers willing to pay such huge fees to play an unfinished game? Although *WoW* is massively anticipated, the reason for the high price is more unusual. For those players who wish to set up trading and adventuring guilds within the game, a head start in learning about the powerful character classes, the game's infrastructure, postal system and the most valuable quest items and loot drops could prove extremely valuable come launch day. Especially given the way online gold converts to real gold these days.

Serious Guild Masters will also wish to register their guild name, which requires at least ten signatures on the Guild Charter (an in-game piece of paper), along with ten gold (a vast quantity of cash, unachievable for inexperienced players for around a month) to pay for their guild tabard.

Just under $580 for social standing and status come launch day... doesn't seem such a bad deal, now, does it?

■ www.worldofwarcraft.com

GAME ART

(T)ERROR

(T)error is an art 'installation' by Robert Praxmarer that has the 'War on Terror' firmly in its iconoclastic sights. A videocamera is linked to a PC running custom game code and a projector that casts a lifesize, wireframe image of the player on a wall. That image is then filled-in with flags of countries that supported the Iraq war, the face of George W Bush, or Osama Bin Laden. To win, the player must leap over tanks, submarines and fighter jets, collecting oil-pumps and dollar notes, and kicking any civilians.

Praxmarer says it is the laughter that attracts people initially. "Fun, games and interaction cause motion, it is then much easier to get involved in the game, and so the change from laughter to sadness is more powerful and obvious."

■ www.servus.at/cubic/(t)error.htm

What's happening in your gaming world?
Tell us your tales of gaming wonder...
pcga@derwent.howard.com.au

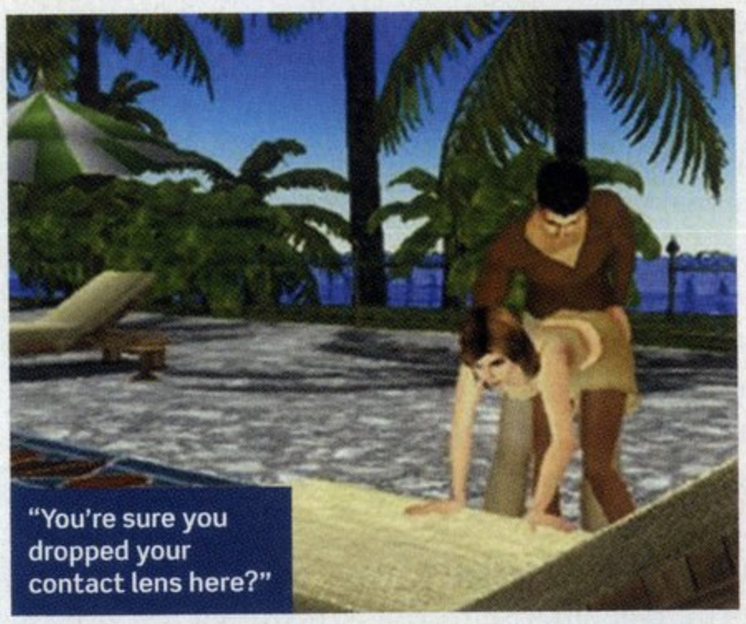
SEX

+3 Bondage

The latest MMO trend: sex

Fantasy roleplaying has taken on a whole new meaning with the debut of two games that actively encourage their players to get down and dirty. The classily-titled *3-Feel*, by Korean developers CM-NET, enables players to explore the wilder side of their avatars as they virtually tease, caress and copulate. It stars 3D models and uses moves motion-captured from the 'exploits' of local adult film-stars.

The Sociolotron, meanwhile, is a seedier, grittier affair, a 2D world resembling a sleazy version of *Ultima Online*. Except with more grinding, obviously. Players roam the functional 2D landscape, bashing monsters, gathering experience points, crafting clothes and humping each other senseless. Among the emotes included are options that span the sexual spectrum including bondage and bestiality. Anyone who can feel their outrage-o-meter rising, but can't resist reading on, should know that *The Sociolotron* is aware of the dangers of unrestrained hedonism. Avatars can catch a range of virtual sexually transmitted diseases, so that should cheer you up. And you can even specialise as a healthcare professional, sorting out cases of e-herpes.


"You're sure you dropped your contact lens here?"

MMO's exploring the most basic of human instincts aren't new. Erotic MUDs have existed for years but the addition of graphics is a significant step that requires debate. Should gamers be able to jump each other's bones in the name of entertainment? Discuss.

■ www.sociolotron.com

Good morning, Rubi-Ka

The DJs who rock the virtual world of *Anarchy Online*

CULTURE HIT THE DECKS

There's a new profession in sci-fi MMORPG *Anarchy Online*. These people have little interest in the Notum Wars and no time to waste on invading aliens. They're DJs. Nano-charged tune-meisters, rolling out phat ones to add some much-needed bump to that MMORPG grind.

They hail from Gridstream Productions (GSP), one of the game's clans or 'Organisations'. The group is dedicated to entertaining *AO*'s virtual population and has carved out a niche in *AO*'s world of Rubi Ka without any intervention from developers Funcom. They shoutcast their daily sets over the internet airwaves like conventional online DJs, but provide an *AO*-relevant soundtrack. And they're in demand. Their busy schedule spans the social scene from player weddings to birthdays and recruitment parties.

Lan 'Tarryk' Kozar is GSP's Director. Having roamed Rubi Ka as a lone DJ he soon hooked up with rival disc spinners to form an outfit so professional, Funcom now hires them for official in-game events. Last month GSP played a weekend-long festival of sets to mark the game's three-year anniversary. Over a thousand in-game listeners tuned in. "We average between 15-25 player-requested events each month," he explains. "Players fill out a form on our website two weeks prior to the event and we work with the player to ensure they get the best event support we can offer."

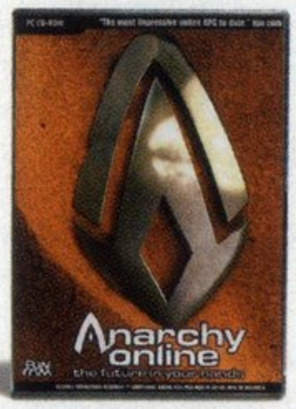
Unlike their real-life counterparts, these buffed-up Blackburns play for free. GSP are funded by in-game payments for Organisation advertisements between tracks. And the virtual hat also goes round to pick up credits as the Bureaucrats and Martial Artists take to the floor for a slow dance. Hiring GSP is easy, but, with players clamouring to spin the *AO* steel wheels, joining their ranks is far more difficult. The DJ has become a popular new profession, one that offers kudos and a far higher profile than any on the character creation screen. "We developed a very extensive application and interview process to filter out those who just want the status symbol," says Tarryk. "Right now we have 17 active DJs and growing. They are the real thing – dedicated, mature and outstanding DJs." No room for Sara Cox here either, then.

GSP's success has led to continued growth. Soon they'll leave their base at Reets Retreat in the city of Borealis for their own club venue, where they'll play to the in-game masses. They're also looking to resurrect their radio talk-shows, an opportunity for players to call up and appear live to air their dirty Omni pants in public. Thanks to GSP they'll always have the internet airwaves to turn to and we'll always have the opportunity to listen in.

MARK SUTHERNS

A single account at **www.live365.com**, loads of mp3s and some patience is all you need to launch yourself as an *Anarchy* DJ.

MMORPG *Anarchy Online* is now three years old, lasting the course thanks to its innovative sci-fi backstory and a relentless string of improvements by developers Funcom.



ON THE DISC More screenshots of *Anarchy Online*'s 24-hour party people boogieing on down > Galleries

FACE OFF

Superstar DJs

Log on, tune in, wig out

RATHAMMER 'DECAVOLT' ZENTOSA
Show times: Wed 8pm EST
Genres: Industrial, Punk, Metal, Psychobilly
Expect to hear: Front Line Assembly, Dropkick Murphys, Tool, The Exploited, KMFDM, Slayer, Tiger Army

CRAIG 'NEXEUS' ERICSON
Show times: Tues 8pm EST
Genres: Hip-Hop, R&B, Electronica, Reggae
Expect to Hear: G-Unit, DMX, Buju Banton, Outkast, Energy52

HARLEY 'TRISTALYN' DAVIDSON
Show times: Fri 8pm EST
Genres: Alternative, Top 40, Dance
Expect to Hear: Evanescence, Guano Apes, No Doubt, Outkast, BT

VINCENT 'VELDRON' DRAKAN
Show times: Thurs 8pm EST
Genres: Hardcore/ Grindcore Metal, Industrial
Expect to Hear: Dark Tranquillity, Iced Earth, Metallica, Rob Zombie, Celldweller

EXPERT ADVICE ON MODEMS & ROUTERS

How to use Ethernet and wireless ADSL devices for gaming

BY HARDWARE EDITOR JERE LAWRENCE & ANDREW FERGUSON

Online gaming is coming into its own as the market for ADSL broadband opens up. PC games these days are often best played against people rather than bots. However, most gamers become frustrated with using the USB ADSL modem that their ISP originally supplied.

While most USB modems work well, some combinations of hardware produce latency spikes during game play, and they have also been known to slow down the framerate.

There is a solution: most modern PCs can connect to the Ethernet via a built-in Ethernet card. The Ethernet interface was always designed for a permanent always-on connection and generally the drivers are a lot more stable than those of the USB ADSL modems.

The wireless router offers the freedom to move your PC around the house, so mates can come over for LAN parties without the need to trail cables everywhere. The cost of wireless networking has dropped drastically in the last year or two, and two PCs can now be wirelessly connected to an ADSL connection for around $300.

So what hardware do you actually need? Well the first thing is to check whether your PC has an Ethernet card. If it does, it should show up as a device in the Windows Device Manager. If you do not have one, a PCI Ethernet card will set you back just $20 to $30 – there is little need to spend more than $50 – and installing an Ethernet card is certainly no harder than installing a graphics card. That certainly wasn't always the case in years gone by.

> The freedom to move your PC around

The next step is deciding what you want to do: do you want to just improve your online gaming experience for a single PC, or do you have multiple machines you want online? Finally, you need to consider whether you want wireless capabilities. Even if you opt for a wired setup initially, wireless can be added at a later date.

People looking for a straight upgrade from a USB modem should consider the D-Link DSL 300T. If at a later date you want to connect more PCs to the ADSL line, simply add a wireless router like the Linksys WRT-54G, or the Linksys BEFSR41 cable/DSL router for around $90 if you are just using the Ethernet. The big advantage of the simple Ethernet ADSL modems is that they do not include any firewall or complex setup procedures, and are very easy to get going.

If you want multiple computers online at the same time, then the choice of hardware becomes much larger. The decision then is do you want Ethernet, wireless or a mixed network? If you just want Ethernet then a router like the Belkin F5D7630 is a good choice – it may only have one Ethernet port, but an Ethernet switch like the Netgear FS608 lets you connect eight PCs to it. The problem with this setup is that some games do not like the connection sharing that routers use (ie, the NAT part of the router), mostly since the PCs no longer have an Internet IP address, but one from a local network. Most routers let you forward some data packets to a specific PC, allowing you to expose either your game server, or the ports needed to get a game to run online. The Belkin F5D7630 actually allows you to share the connection with multiple PCs *and* give one PC the ISP assigned IP address, which avoids this problem.

Adding wireless capability to an ADSL router like the Belkin F5D7630 is easy; buy a wireless access point like the Netgear WG602. A wireless access point is really an Ethernet to Wireless network converter and is generally very simple to setup. Also if

LED INDICATORS
These three lights indicate the state of your modem and the network. From here you can see if your modem is powered up, if it has obtained an IP address from your ISP and if wireless traffic is connected.

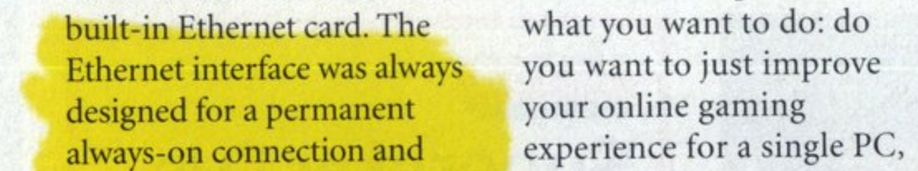
ADSL PORT
Your ADSL connection from your phone socket plugs in here. Check with your ISP before plugging in though, as some require the use of line splitters that act as a bridge between your socket and your modem.

ETHERNET PORTS
This device, the US Robotics 9106 Wireless Modem and Router, also has four Ethernet ports which enable you to easily connect four PCs to your network in addition to wireless devices.

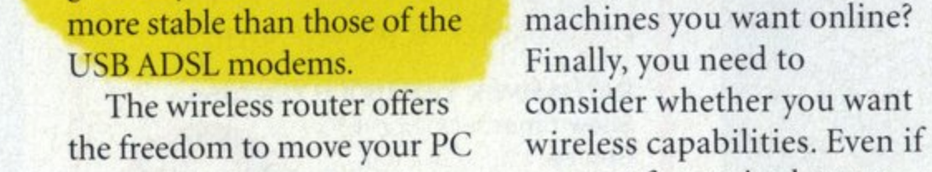
SYSTEMS README

›**WHY AM I HERE?** Because dumping your old USB ADSL modem will help to maximise your online gaming ping

›**RISK FACTOR?** It's as dangerous as taking on a...


Kobold | Goblin | Wolf | Orc | Ogre | Dragon

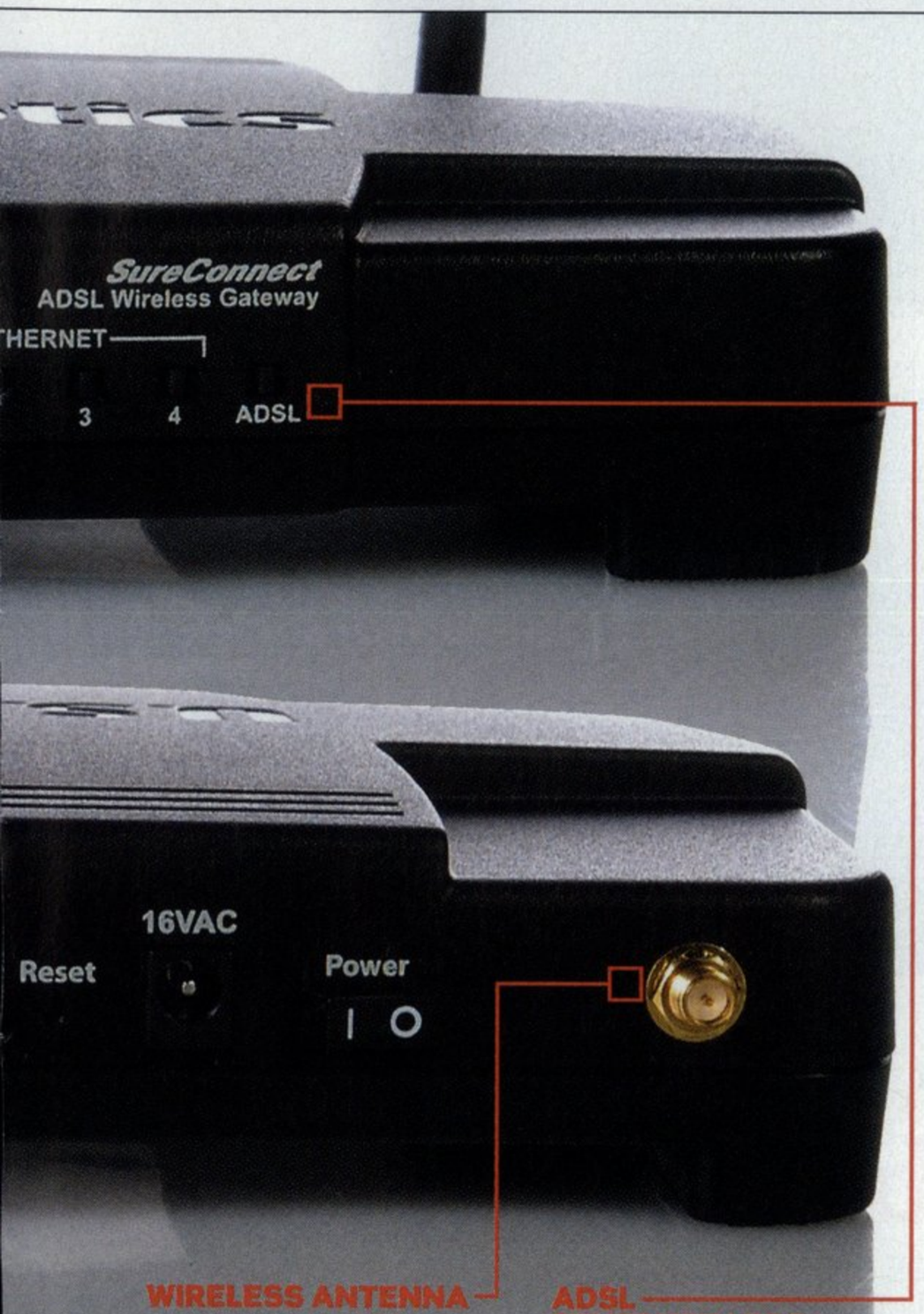
›**IS IT EASY?** It's as mentally challenging as...


Serious Sam | Doom 3 | Thief 3 | Perimeter | Myst | ChessBrain 9000

›**SELL IT TO ME...** After reading this article you'll be able to plan your home network and buy the right hardware.

PC GAMES ADDICT DICTIONARY THE OED OF GAMING

PCI ›Standard expansion slot on PC motherboards.
802.11b ›Wireless network standard running at 2.4GHz, runs at around 5MBps in real world tests.
802.11g ›Newer wireless standard also at 2.4GHz, runs at around 20Mbps in tests.
NAT ›Network Address Translation, the method by which a router is able to take a single IP address from an ISP and share it between many PCs.
Virtual Server ›Also called port forwarding, the method by which you can make holes in the security element of NAT to allow connections from across the Internet to your game.
UDP Data packets ›How the data for your online game is usually sent across the Internet.
TCP Data packets ›A different type of data packet sent across the Internet, commonly used with web browsing and file downloads, some games also use it.



WIRELESS ANTENNA
All you have to do is simply attach your antenna here to allow you to set up your wireless radio signal. Detachable antenna are definitely the better option, since they allow you to make any future upgrades.

ADSL ETHERNET LEDS
You're looking for solid green light from the first LED here. This tells you that your ADSL connection is healthy. The four flashing LEDs will keep you informed about your network traffic.

the budget is tight, then for gaming there is no difference between 802.11g and 802.11b, except that the 802.11b kit is cheaper.

If you are looking to share your connection wirelessly, look for an all-in-one wireless ADSL modem/router. They include an ADSL modem, router, Ethernet switch and wireless access point all in the one case, and cost around $220. Configuring them is no harder than the Ethernet-only devices. Obviously, to use the wireless network your PC needs a wireless network card. If you are using the PC for gaming we would suggest steering clear of the USB wireless network cards, which can exhibit latency spikes. Wireless PCI cards like the Linksys WMP54G are great things for gaming PCs, and you can even connect an Ethernet card to a wireless network using kit like the Linksys WET54G Wireless Ethernet Bridge. Many column inches are written about wireless security. The short answer would be to at least run WEP encryption, or the newer and more secure WPA standard, to stop people accessing your connection.

The biggest worry that many people have with changing their ADSL hardware is that their ISP will not support the hardware. The best thing to do in this case is to leave the drivers for your old USB modem installed, but simply unplug it; if there is a fault, you can double check whether it is the line or simply a problem with your new hardware.

The marketplace for ADSL hardware is growing rapidly and the best bargains are often online, but keep an eye out for special offers in the high street as decent wireless hardware is getting into the shops now.

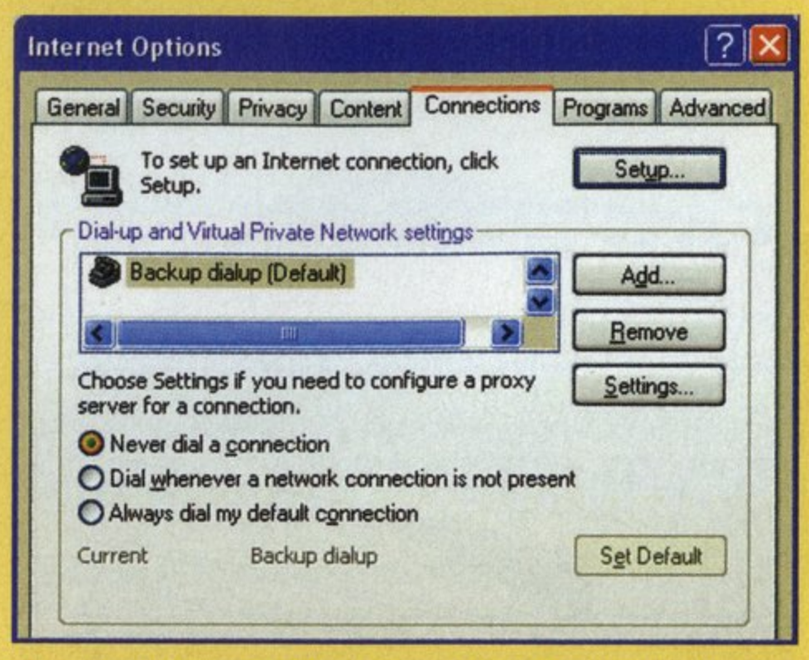
Want a tech topic covered?
Then mail your request to:
jerel@derwenthoward.com.au

WHAT NEXT...?

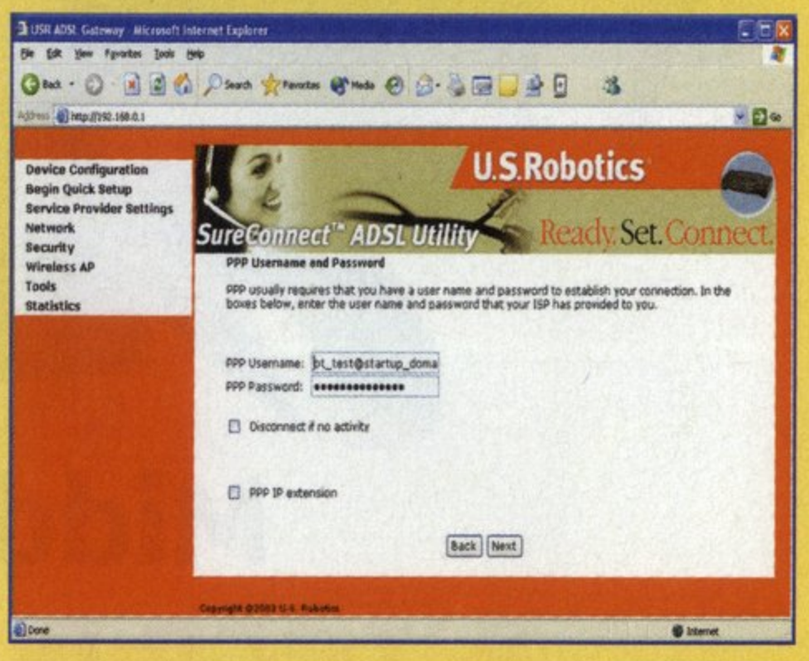
›See our review of the Belkin F5D7630 this issue.
›If you have one PC and want better online gaming, the D-Link DSL-300T is for you.
›If you have multiple PCs, look at using wireless hardware to avoid lots of cabling.
›If you are worried about getting the games to work on a shared connection, the Belkin F5D7630 is the perfect solution.
›Ask friends and other gamers what they use; someone somewhere will have probably had the same worries as you.

MASTERCLASS

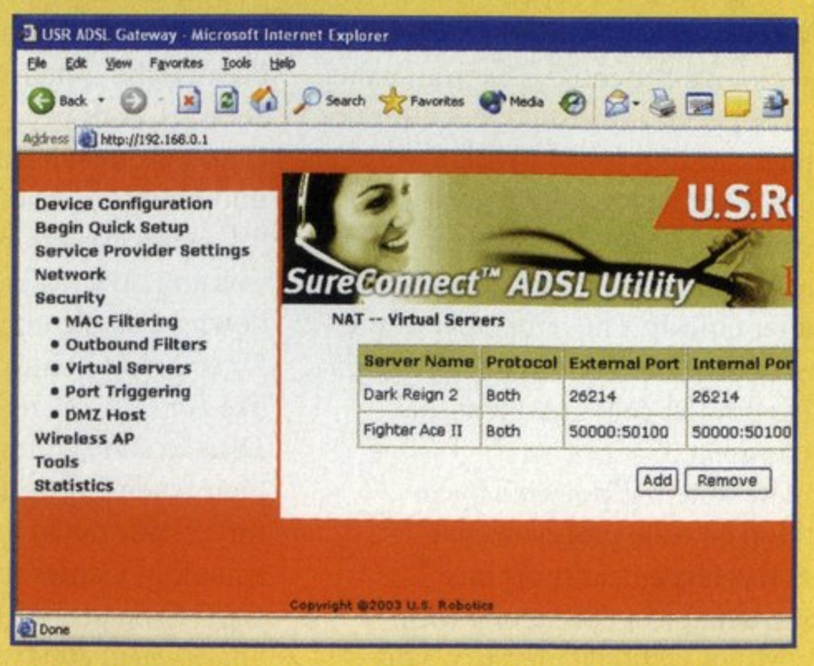
How to... Set up your ADSL router



1 Select Internet options in your Control Panel and make sure your network card is detected by Windows. You'll need to set it up to get an IP address automatically. Elsewhere in the Connections panel you'll need to make sure that you tell Internet Explorer to 'never dial a connection', otherwise your PC will look on the Internet for the router's web configuration, rather than across the Ethernet connection.



2 Next you'll need to configure the router by visiting its built-in web server. Essentially, this means getting the router to lock onto the ADSL signal, and entering your ISP supplied username and password. Refer carefully to the manual here as you may need to obtain extra settings information from your ISP before you start. Generally most units come with a quick setup guide or wizard to make this part of the process simpler.



3 Check the Internet connection works for web browsing, email and your games. If you have trouble connecting to servers for a particular game it could be that you need to tweak some settings to allow it to run behind a NAT router/firewall. Visiting the games' official website or forum should offer you a solution. It's possible that you'll need to set up some virtual server rules for some games.

Middle of the road
Altech Mighty Cube $2,399

Altech www.altech.com.au (02) 9735 5655

Giving insight into its name, the Mighty Cube is housed in the newer styled mini-system case and from the front on does look quite cubic. The front panel is made from a mirrored metal surface which certainly looks stylish and elegant but will require regular cleaning to maintain the effect because fingerprints and smears gather quickly. The remainder of the case is tastefully coloured with a white gloss powder coat treatment that looks great.

The system is powered by an Athlon 64 3200 processor on a 1.6GHz Hyper transport bus (equivalent to a FSB) along with 512MB of DDR400 memory. This makes for a desktop system that absolutely flies and Windows XP starts in an amazing 13 seconds. Equally impressive, applications open at an astounding speed and even notoriously slow programs such as Outlook and Word take only a couple of seconds to start.

This performance isn't however carried over when it comes to gaming because the system uses a RADEON 9600 XT as its primary video card. Credit where it is due though, this mid range card can render DirectX 8.1 games exceptionally well and only really falls down when it comes to DirectX 9.0x. Thus, games like *Far Cry*, *Doom III* and *Deus Ex 2* are going to need their rendering options turned way down to run smoothly. Games such as *C&C Generals* and *Unreal Tournament 2004* will however run well at 1024x768. To put it into perspective, the gaming abilities of this system are similar to that of the Acer laptop reviewed this issue. Pop in a more powerful video card though and you can triple your 3D/gaming score. But a point of note, this barebones system only has room for a single slot AGP card – a 6800 Ultra is not going to fit in there.

KEY FEATURES

- Athlon 64 3200
- RADEON 9600XT
- 80GB Hard Disk
- LG 17" LCD TFT monitor
- Creative wireless desktop 6000

Storage options are quite good and an 80GB Seagate Barrucade 7200 RPM drive provides a reasonable amount of room for applications and data and should keep the average user happy. Optical storage is handled by the Samsung SM-325F combo drive that can read and write at 52x CD speed and read a DVD at 16x. And for the odd emergency there's also a 3.5" 1.44MB Floppy drive.

The monitor included in the package is an LG Flatron L1710S 17" TFT LCD monitor. LG monitors have always fared extremely well in this tech section and this one is no exception. Excellent backlighting makes for an even, well lit image and 12 months on, LG screens remain superior when it comes to richness of colour. A fast pixel refresh means that when gaming there's no annoying blurring of the image, just a stable, bright, clear picture. The only criticism that can be made against the monitor is that the L1710S only has a 15-pin VGA input and no DV-I capabilities.

Making for an uncluttered desk, the system ships with Creative's wireless desktop 6000, a package that includes a wireless keyboard and mouse. The keyboard is comfortable to type on with plenty of additional multimedia and Windows function keys and the 800 DPI wireless mouse is very responsive and fast enough to be used effectively in gaming.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 83%
VALUE 81%

83%

> A well priced mid range system!

One nice frill
CASEPOWER I-CUTE
$139

PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au (03) 9584 7266

Constructed of steel alloy there's nothing particularly cute about this case. For starters, it's heavy and the front panel is annoyingly difficult to open as it involves pressing into a plastic depression and then applying vast amounts of strength to open the door. The poor design is bound to cause repeated trips to the swear jar, as the scraping of knuckles is inevitable. Underneath, the most interesting feature of the case is a large 120mm LED fan that is surrounded by a speaker housing. The catch is that the blades of the fan are in a Jet engine configuration which some might like but more usefully can move a lot of air quickly.

The left panel features a large clear window that fills around 90% of the entire area with an LED fan mounted on the lower left and is made more attractive with a metal alloy grill. Removal of the panel is achieved through the use of a handle but really this case isn't much different from older similarly styled cases.

Inside, two more rear mounted 80mm LED fans help to improve airflow and light the case plus a removable motherboard plate makes first installs that bit easier. Five 5.25" bays offer plenty of room for optical devices and LCD panels plus there's additional space for five 3.5" hard disks. Easy to remove, the drives are installed in a side mounted configuration using clip-in brackets and receive air directly from the front 'jet' to keep the drives cool.

The front panel thankfully can be accessed independently of the pain inducing door and features two USB 2.0 ports, one Firewire, mic-in, headphones out and a dial to control the speed of the front jet-fan.

PCGAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 60%
VALUE 85%
74%
›Gimmick doesn't save the flaws!

Ultra light
ANTEC P160
$249

Altech www.altech.com.au (02) 9735 5655

Antec's latest case is tastefully clad in brushed aluminium, giving it an elegant finish with the added bonus that it's extremely light. Offering excellent modding options, it features a clear window that's 90% the size of the entire panel. Accessing the inside of the machine is made easy through the use of two dials, one lockable, that when rotated allows for easy removal of the left panel.

Inside, the case is ultra roomy with plenty of space for installing and working with motherboards and drives. Four 5.25" bays, two with aluminium doors, offer plenty of room for optical devices and the ingenious hard disk bay can house four side-mounted hard disks that are easily removed via their clip-in bracket. There's also two 120mm LED fans and a front panel that features 2xUSB, 1 Firewire, mic-in and headphones-out and that essential of buttons, the reset.

PCGAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 87%
VALUE 72%
85%
›Sleek, stylish and light.

Wheely Cool
LIAN LI PC-V1000
$399

Anyware www.anyware.com.au (02) 9879 5788

The PC-V1000 is a professional, sturdy case that's ideal for the user who's after a clean finish rather than a light show because this case has no clear side panel. Made of anodized aluminium, it's considerably tougher than other aluminium offerings and the 2mm thick sheets that the case is built from are strong and tough while still quite light.

Unique in design, this case breaks all the rules when it comes to the location of components. Firstly, the power supply is mounted on the bottom which is feasible because the case sits on solid metal wheels giving 40mm of clearance for airflow. Six hard disk bays are also ingeniously located at the bottom and above there's room for four 5.25" devices. Two 120mm fans aided by a plethora of air holes keep things cool and it's only let down by the location of the two USB 2.0, Firewire and mic-in/headphones ports that are right at the very bottom and way out of reach.

PCGAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 88%
VALUE 65%
81%
›Professional, sturdy and well designed.

Overclock me
ASUS V9999 GAMER EDITION
$749

Asus www.synnex.com 1300 880 038

The V9999 represents somewhat of a conundrum due to how it addresses nVIDIA's powerful, but hard to implement current generation of video solution. The first straight 6800 we've seen the difference between this and the 6800 ultra is that the 6800 has a core that's 50MHz slower at 350MHz. Memory is also 50MHz slower at 500MHz for an effective speed of 1000MHz. The biggest sacrifice however is in the GPU itself which can only utilise 12 pixel pipelines as opposed to the Ultra's 16.

Asus however has designed this card with the very real intention of it being overclocked, thus we suspect, the "Gamer" moniker. Supposed to be a single Molex solution, the V9999 requires power from two connectors, just like the 6800 Ultra. This is because of the unique overclocking abilities of the Asus card. A powerful high performance metal heat sink covers 70% of the card and effectively cools GPU and memory along with a custom application that dynamically overclocks the card based on load performance. Under standard conditions in a well ventilated case, core speeds of 420MHz can be achieved, 70MHz faster than default. Memory doesn't overclock as high and it's worth remembering that the software application that controls it constantly tweaks the speed faster or slower based on heat, voltage and other factors.

Ultimately it could be said that the V9999 is reminiscent of the Ti4200 (another nVIDIA product) from a couple of years ago that many users discovered could be overclocked to near Ti4600 levels. Asus have definitely managed to achieve this but the lesser number of pixel shaders in the 6800 means that it will be slower at DirectX 9.0x operations than the Ultra no matter how hard it's overclocked. Nothing much has changed in Asus's software bundle and *Deus Ex 2* remains the game of most note.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 92%
VALUE 77%

86%

›Utilises all of the 6800's performance

All for one...
BELKIN WIRELESS ADSL MODEM/ROUTER
F5D7630
$299

Belkin www.belkin.com.au 1800 666 040

When it comes to Wireless, Belkin have quite the history. Since 802.11a, the first iteration of what was to become Wi-Fi, it has been producing wireless equipment long before it was in vogue.

A rather user friendly, home orientated router, the F5D7630 features four ports to connect up wired machines, wireless access, routing/Internet sharing and ADSL modem. All this in a tiny package that takes up a footprint of only 220mm (W) x 130mm (D) x 25mm (H).

Configuration isn't too difficult but it's necessary to connect to the router's web setup page as there is no automated software to run on a client PC. Once connected the router starts a wizard process that asks the type of connection (PPPoE/PPPoA) your userid, password and in most cases will then result in a clean easy connection.

Further functionality is however rather limited, and for a gamer this router is worth thinking twice about. This is said primarily because an important function for gamers behind a router/firewall is port forwarding. Now some games use only one port whilst others use many, or a range, and this is where the router is limited – you can't add ranges. Instead, you need to add each entry separately which takes a lot more time.

KEY FEATURES

- **802.11G 54Mbps**
- ADSL modem built in
- **Web based setup**
- Small footprint

Otherwise the usual swag of functions exist, you can designate a PC as a demilitarised zone (DMZ) that ALL internet traffic is forwarded too or ban certain PCs off the network.

Also, it can be set so that only certain PCs can be allowed to access the Internet between set hours which is handy for parents wishing to control their children's usage, but more importantly, teched-up house mates wishing to cause mischief on each other.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 73%
VALUE 72%

73%

›Not a router for the hardcore

Gamer Friendly
ACER TRAVELMATE 8000
$4,499

Acer www.acer.com.au 1300 362 328

To date, Centrino notebooks haven't made for the best gaming platforms but upgrades in the technology are definitely helping. The first occurs with the CPU and the TravelMate 8000 features the new 1.8GHz Pentium M 745. Formerly codenamed Dothan, Intel's new mobile CPU is based on a 90nm manufacturing process, features 2MB of L2 cache and resides on a 400MHz front side bus.

KEY FEATURES

- **1.8GHz Pentium M processor**
- 512MB of DDR333 memory
- **80GB Hard Disk**
- 15" TFT LCD screen

The most significant performance increase however comes from the video chipset, ATI's Mobility Radeon 9700 with 128MB of memory. Offering full DirectX 8.1 and moderate DirectX 9 support, this chipset, along with the beefy processor allows for most games to run quite capably. Older games such as C&C Generals run great at 1024x768 while newer games such as Unreal Tournament 2004 keep a solid frame rate at 800x600. It is however worth remembering that this video chipset does require more power when gaming and will decrease battery life by 10-15 percent.

The 15" 1400x1050 screen is easy to read with good backlighting and although not officially Widescreen is dimensioned well enough for DVD playback. An 80GB ATA100 hard disk offers excellent amounts of storage and 512MB of DDR333 memory helps keep applications zipping along smoothly.

Intel has also upgraded their Wireless chipset, the PRO/Wireless 2200BG provides fast wireless (802.11g) at 54Mbps which is great for streaming videos, copying files, and if the connection is solid enough, FPS online gaming. Indeed, the gaming abilities of this laptop are such that you could plonk down at a public Hotspot and capably frag away online.

Connectivity options are comprehensive with highlights including DVI out, Firewire, Gigabyte Ethernet, 4 x USB 2.0 ports and a 4-in-1 card reader. For the security conscious there's even a smartcard system that can be used like a key so that the PC can't be started unless it's inserted.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 93%
VALUE 65%

82%

› Fast Centrino gaming but expensive

Highly RAIDable
ASUS K8N-E DELUXE $249

Asus www.synnex.com 1300 880 038

Supporting AMD's latest processor, the Athlon 64, the K8N-E makes for a good starting point if you're out to assemble your own 64-bit solution. Featuring nVIDIA's nForce 3 250Gb chipset it supports up to 3GB of unbuffered PC3200 (DDR400) memory along with support for two ATA133 and SATA150 devices. Furthermore a Sil 3114 RAID controller adds support for another four SATA hard disks that can be used in RAID configurations 0, 1, 10 and 5.

On board sound is handled by the Realtek ALC850 and can power up to eight speakers through configurable 3.5mm mini jacks or alternatively output can be sent to a surround decoder via either S/PDIF or digital coaxial. Overclocking options are good voltage and adjustment of the CPU, memory and AGP is achievable from the BIOS. I/O is also suitably abundant with five PCI, one AGP 8x, two Firewire and six USB 2.0 ports.

PC GAMES ADDICT

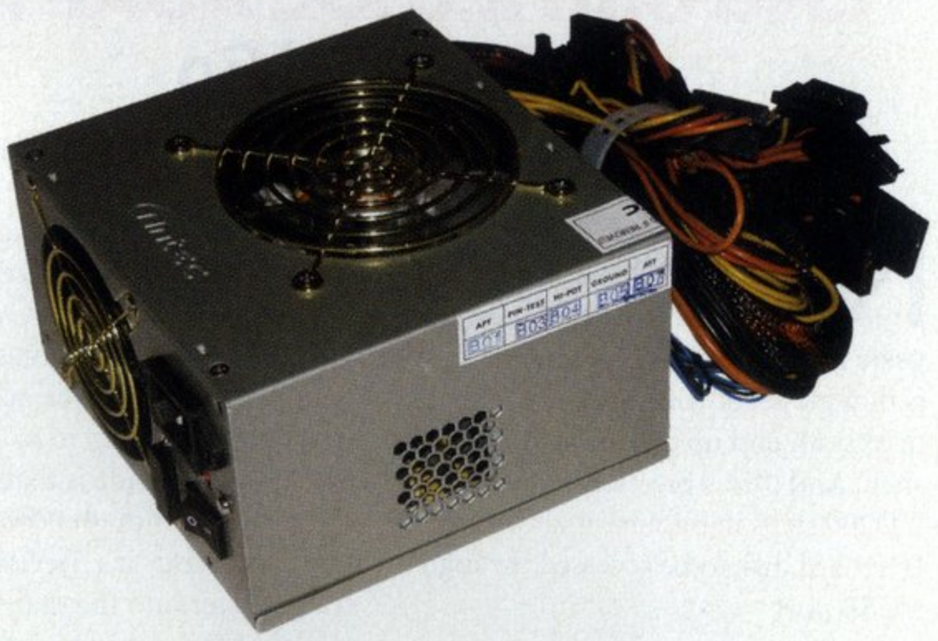
PERFORMANCE 86%
VALUE 89%

88%

› A quality Socket 754 motherboard

Power to the people
ANTEC TRUE480, 480W POWER SUPPLY $154

Altech www.altech.com.au (02) 9735 5655



The market for quality power supplies continues to increase as the power requirements of home PCs continue to rise. Able to handle the most power hungry of video cards such as nVIDIA's 6800/Ultra there's still plenty of power left in the True480 for multiple hard disks and optical drives. To keep the components inside cool the PSU utilises an 80mm fan to vent heat from the rear and a 90mm fan below into the case's exhaust system.

To fulfil your power requirements you get six 5.25" Molex power outlets that are particularly well made with gold plated contacts that don't move in the housing. Two 5.25" Molex fan connectors helps avoid the use of an ugly splitter cable and a 3.5" Molex connector for floppy drives.

Although the PSU lacks the newer PCI-Express video power plug it does have two SATA power connections and a 3 pin plug that connects to the motherboard to report fan speed.

PC GAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 83%
VALUE 60%

78%

› Reliably power a decked out machine

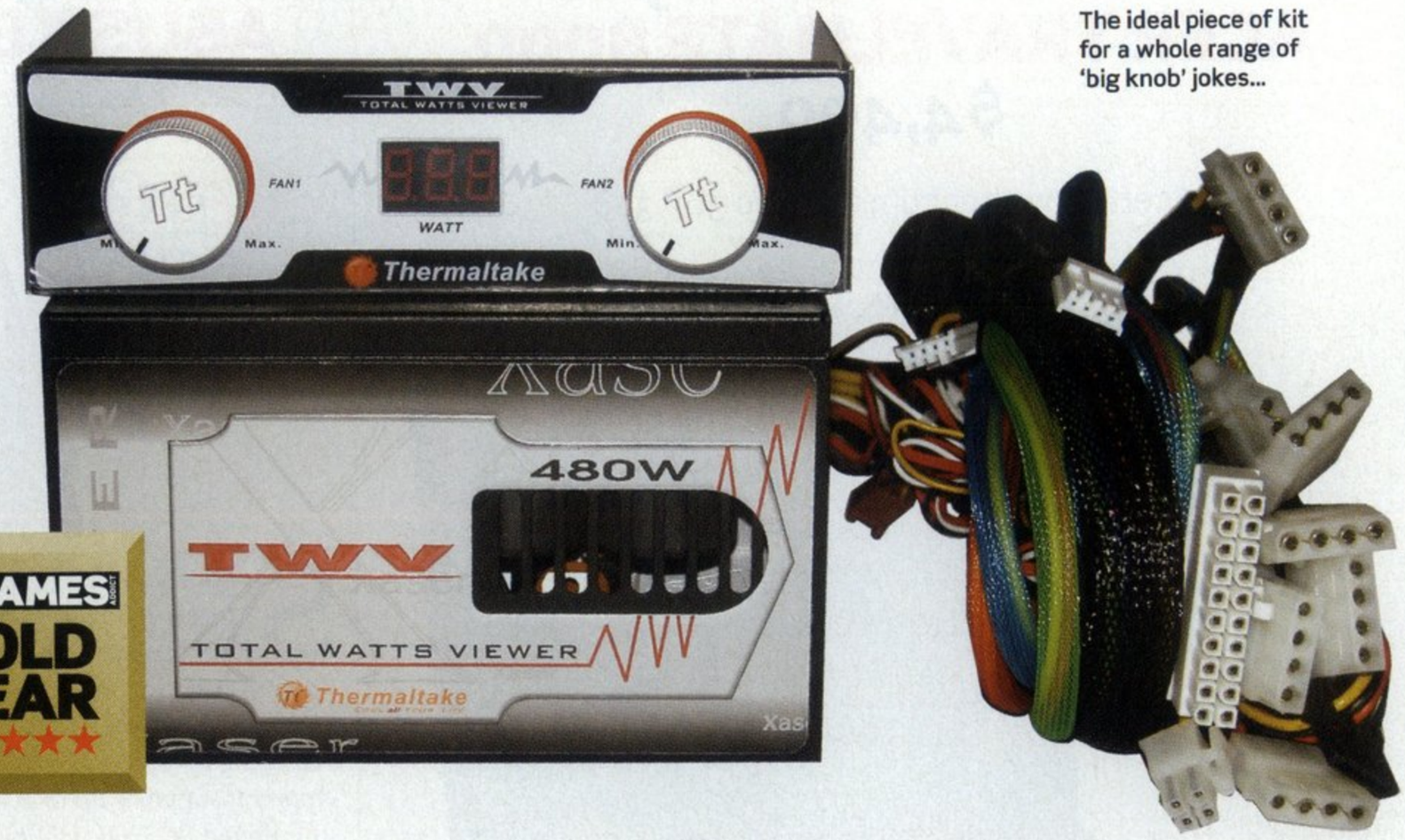
Perusing the power...

THERMALTAKE PUREPOWER WATTAGE VIEWER

$169

PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au

(03) 9584 7266



The ideal piece of kit for a whole range of 'big knob' jokes...

PC GAMES GOLD GEAR ★★★★★

Especially with the release of nVIDIA's 6800 Ultra video card and the increasing commonality of multi-drive RAID setups in hardcore gamer systems there is the possibility of all kinds of problems due to an under-spec power supply. Help is at hand though because Thermaltake have come up with a classy solution to this problem. The Purepower kit consists of a quality 480W power supply that's powder coated black and features two exhaust fans with good air flow to help keep the unit running stably. Connection wise it's got just about all the plugs you could want including 3.5" and 5.25" Molex connectors, SATA power and all the essential motherboard connections. It does not however include the new PCI-Express video card power plug so isn't recommended for a new PCI-E solution.

But what sets this power supply apart is that it features a three pin plug that connects to a front panel and displays via LED just how many Watts your machine is pulling. Exceptionally useful, besides the obvious advantage of knowing if power hungry video cards will work in your system it's interesting to watch the Wattage increase and decrease under different load conditions. Sweetening the deal, is the inclusion of two 80mm orange case fans that connect to the front panel and are controlled individually with two dials.

Installation is really quite simple and as easy as changing a power supply and plugging a connector into the front panel. As power supplies go the Purepower is especially easy to work with because all the wires to the Molex connectors are encased in gauze making for a rather attractive, clean finish. An excellent power supply that is made even better through the inclusion of a Wattage indicator on the front panel.

PC GAMES ADDICT

INSTALLATION
MODERATE

› No more brown outs

88%

Naked hard disk on desk

ENG USB 2.0 IDE ADAPTER UD200 $60

Compuparts www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582

Now here's a very interesting gadget indeed. A common trend between modders and users that upgrade their own systems is that inevitably one or many IDE drives can end up collecting dust on a shelf. And this is precisely where the UD200 steps in because it allows an IDE hard disk to be accessed through a USB port.

Installation is simple. Plug the 40-pin IDE connector into a hard disk and the USB plug into the PC and it will be identified as a USB mass storage device. Old data can be accessed or new data backed up to it.

The only downside is that USB doesn't offer enough power to run a hard disk. Thus it's necessary to plug a transformer into the mains, a standard DC connection into the adaptor to power the on-board IDE circuitry and a 5.25" Molex connector into the hard disk.

PC GAMES ADDICT

INSTALLATION
EASY

› Access an IDE drive through USB

84%

It's certainly quiet

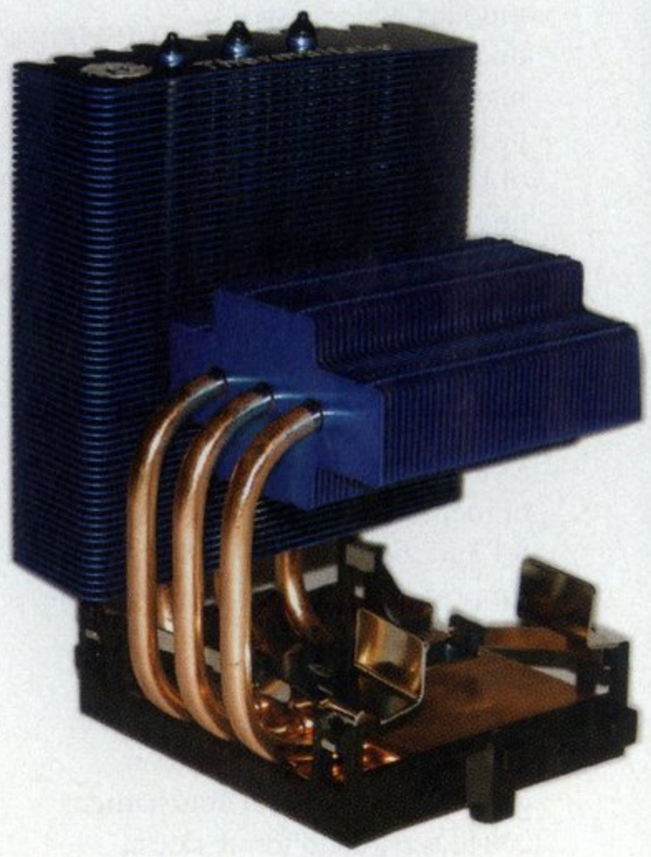
THERMALTAKE FANLESS 103

$79

Altech www.anyware.com.au (02) 9879 5788

If you're looking to give your machine that extra special touch, something more than just a pretty light, then the Fanless 103 is worth considering. Besides the obvious advantage that the heat sink requires no fan and is therefore noiseless it can definitely draw attention and illicit a "what the heck is that" kind of remark. Showy indeed but this design is all part of the physics of fan-less cooling.

The way it works is that a large copper plate absorbs the heat of the CPU and through the use of solid copper "heat pipes" transfers that thermal energy to two air cooled radiators. Ideal for P4s up to 3.6GHz and the Athlon 64/FX, overclocking is relative to environment and depends on airflow through your case and ambient operating temperatures. It also weighs 752g which means that it mounts just fine vertically for normal operation but when travelling the case should be placed on its side.



PC GAMES ADDICT

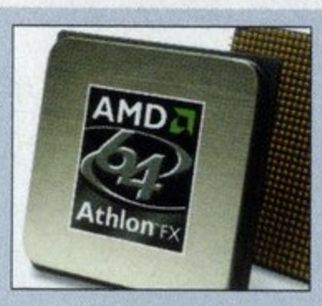
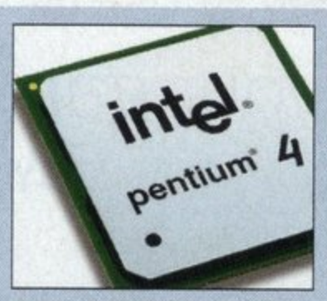
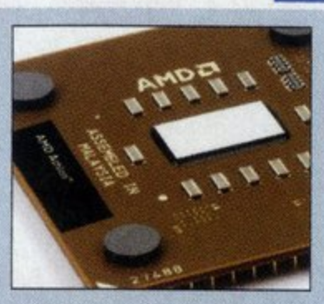
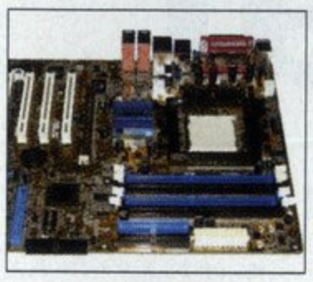
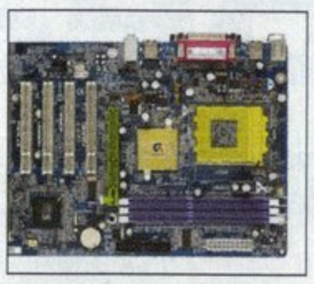
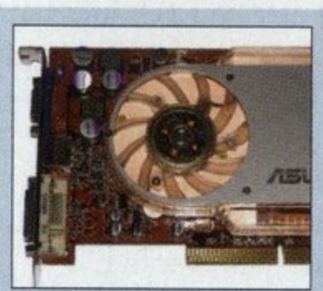
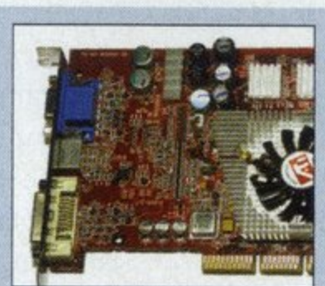
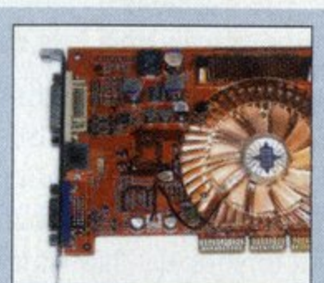
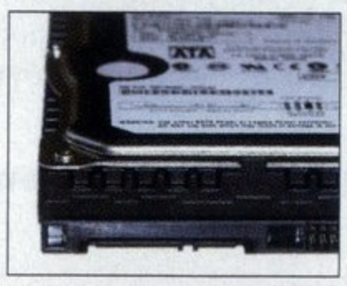
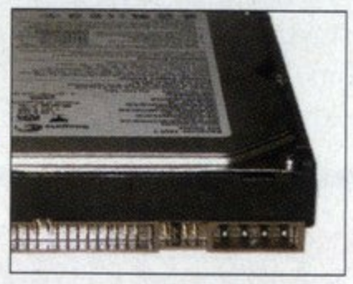
INSTALLATION
DIFFICULT

› Noiseless cooling that looks the part

79%

BIG GEAR HUNT

Your definitive guide to the best hardware money can buy

	BEST IN CLASS	MID RANGE	BUDGET CHOICE
PROCESSOR	**ATHLON FX-53** $1,429 AMD www.i-tech.com.au 1 800 833 883  "Able to compute an astonishing 64 bits in one pass the FX-53 is ready for the next generation of operating systems and games"	**PENTIUM 4EE** $1,479 Intel www.i-tech.com.au 1 800 833 883  "The extreme edition of Intel's Pentium 4 processor is fast, and in the right hands highly overclockable."	**ATHLON XP 3000** $270 www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582  "The XP CPUs are quite swift but affordable with their reliance on a 400MHz FSB. The 3000 runs on a 333MHZ FSB."
MOTHER BOARDS	**A8V DELUXE** $223 Asus www.asus.com.au (02) 9683 3488  Dual Channel DDR, 1000Mbps LAN and 802.11g Wi-Fi, Full RAID, 8x AGP and a 2GHZ FSB. The perfect home for an FX-53	**MSI 915P NEO 2 PLATINUM** NEW $249 MSI www.msicomputer.com.au (02) 9748 0070 Happily midrange, this affordable MSI motherboard offers all the advantages of PCI-Express such as fast video and RAID. **PCGA 25 89%**	**GA-7S748** $70 Gigabyte www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582  "Don't expect any on board additions but with a 400MHz front side bus, this board can power an XP3200+ for such a tiny price."
GRAPHICS CARDS	**RADEON AX800XT** $899 Asus www.synnex.com.au 1300 880 038  "An uber-fast card that's hassle free and able to handle the next generation of games without a hiccough." **PCGA 25 94%**	**RADEON 9800 PRO** $399 Achieva www.achieva.com.au (02) 9742 3288  "Able to render DX 8.1 games at 1600x1200 and DX 9 games at 1024x768 this is the perfect mid range card. " **PCGA 14 94%**	**GEFORCE FX5700** $275 MSI www.msicomputer.com.au (02) 9748 0070  "With the advent of Half Life 2 and Doom 3 you don't want a card any more budget than this" **PCGA 18 91%**
HARD DRIVES	**RAPTOR WD740** $449 Achieva www.achieva.com.au (02) 9742 3288  "Although only 74GB in size, these 10,000 RPM wonders give top performance, especially in a SATA RAID setup. Pure speed." **PCGA 20 97%**	**MAXTOR MAXLINE III** NEW $420 Maxtor www.maxtor.com (02) 9368 3662 "The new king of SATA quarter terabyte drives. Only 7200 RPM this baby can burst at 79.8MB/sec." **PCGA 25 95%**	**SEAGATE ST3200822A** $209 I-Tech www.i-tech.com.au 1 800 833 883  "200GB is nothing to be sneezed at and the PATA (old IDE) interface means it will work on anyone's system." **PCGA 23 84%**
MOUSE PADS	**MX700 WIRE-LESS OPTICAL MOUSE** $149 Logitech www.logitech.com.au (02) 9648 1818 "This high performance mouse never misses a beat. Fast movement with never a cord to get in the way.."	**MX510 OPTICAL MOUSE** $85 Logitech www.logitech.com.au (02) 9648 1818 A 5.8 megapixel/sec optical sensor that can handle 15g of acceleration ensures precise translation of movement. **PCGA 24 89%**	**BASIC OPTICAL MOUSE** $20 Compuparts www.compuarts.com.au (02) 9482 2582 Not as fast or responsive as its rivals, MS's vanilla flavoured mouse gets the job done.
WANT THAT	**MOMO RACING WHEEL** Momo racing wheel $249 Logitech www.Logitech.com.au (02) 9648 1818 "With excellent force feedback effects and a fast responsive wheel driving games take on a whole new dimension.." **PCGA 17 93%**		

INSERT COIN(S)

Prices vary wildly in the real world. To get the best price on computer kit by contacting three different retailers and comparing costs.

- **Compuparts**
  02 9482 2582
  www.compuparts.com.au
- **Emagen Computuers**
  1300 880 070
  www.emagen.com.au
- **EYO**
  02 9790 8822
  www.eyo.com.au
- **Gamedude**
  07 3387 1500
  www.gamedude.com.au
- **Grays Online Australia**
  Phone N/A
  www.graysonline.com.au
- **Harris Technology**
  1300 139 999
  www.ht.com.au
- **I-Tech Australia**
  1800 833 883
  www.i-tech.com.au
- **Razor Prices**
  www.razorprices.com
- **Techbuy Australia**
  02 9648 1818
  www.techbuy.com.au

KEEP YOUR PC SQUEAKY CLEAN

Show your games machine the love

BY JON HICKS

DO IT... NOW!

Beat the heat

DUST BUSTING

PROBLEM The interior of your PC looks like wombles have been murdered in it
REMEDY Blast it clean with compressed air
RESULT Lower temperatures and less risk

Dust is vile: mite-breeding, dead-skin-based and also – as one luckless Future staffer has just found out – potentially fatal to your PC. Now that summer's here, choked cooling components can just give up under the strain, so a spot of cleaning is highly advised. Unless you live in a hermetically sealed clean room – in which case you're clearly some sort of global supervillain who can afford their own technical support – dust is always going to get in and it's usually going to screw things up, mostly through overheating. Should this occur, your PC will point it out by random graphics corruption, crashing repeatedly and/or sounding a regular beeping from the onboard speaker. That should prompt an immediate shut-down and de-dusting. New cases have removable dust filters in the front that can be cleaned, but for lesser-priced mortals simply popping the side off the case will reveal a vista of grey fluff.

Don't go reaching for the vacuum cleaner, though – the rush of fast-flowing air generates static. Other tactics likely to kill rather than clean include spittle-spraying attempts to blow dust away and manual dusting, which is extremely fiddly and likely to break things. Opt instead for the safer and far more entertaining option of a can of compressed air from a specialist camera or PC shop.

Prepare for each attack by jamming the fans with a straw; this protects them from getting violently spun in the wrong direction. You should also protect your eyes. Thus readied, unleash your mighty wind through your PC's innards, paying particular attention to the alarmingly capacious slots in your heatsinks. You'll finish up with a horrifying amount of dust and a cleaner, happier more productive computer.

ON THE DISC Upgrade your games machine with our essential selection of utilities and apps > Toolkit

You can keep an eye on further problems by installing Motherboard Monitor from this month's disc – this sticks a temperature readout in your System Tray, which should be around 40-50 degrees Celsius. Above 60 is a worry, and beyond 80 is a real problem. If it's a baking hot day try removing the case and using a fan as a quick fix.

When Jon is late with his copy, we always make him dress like this.

UTILITY OF THE MONTH

MOZILLA FIREFOX

Internet Explorer might be free and it's certainly easy, but it's never been fun – the list of possible security exploits is just embarrassing. Strike a blow for open source and personal satisfaction by switching to the far superior and free Firefox, which you'll find on the disc. It's much faster, Google search is built-in, tabbed browser windows save you cluttering up your system tray and damn near every site on the web supports it. Internet Explorer is not the only way. Tell your friends. Vive la revolution!

DO IT... THIS WEEKEND!

Build an update catalogue

SECURITY

PROBLEM Updating Windows every time you reinstall it is a nightmare
REMEDY Download all the patches and create your own update archive
RESULT Avoids Windows XP viral outbreak

As I've gently suggested here before, Windows is shot through with crippling security holes, and if you want to stand any chance at all of system stability you've got to keep up with the constant dribble of patches, fixes, and acts of ritual sacrifice required to update it. This is a particular nightmare when it comes to reinstalling, as hitting the internet with a virgin copy of XP can saddle you with numerous infections well before you can download the required updates. Prepare for such eventualities by building your own update collection. On **www.windowsupdate.com**, click "Personalise Windows Update" and check "Display link to Windows Update Catalog". Click Save Settings on the link that appears, and you can download all the existing updates as self-installing files that you can then burn to CD-ROM for that next reinstall moment.

Not bugs. *Features.* All 139 of them.

If that sounds too much like hard work, then you can have Microsoft do it for you. Head over to **www.microsoft.com/security/protect/cd/order.asp** and they'll send you a CD with all the patches released before October 2003 – it'll take a couple of weeks.

Essential Tech Tips

TECH SUBJECT
Thief on Radeon

It sounds like a drugged-up criminal, but in fact this month's topic refers to the problem of getting *Thief* and *Thief 2* to run on the popular Radeon 9800 Pro.

1 Problem When trying to play *Thief (2)* on a Radeon 9800 Pro in hardware accelerated mode an error occurs that texture memory is being misreported.

Solution Some video cards do not report the amount of available memory on board the video card and can cause *Thief (2)* to crash. This has been found to occur on the following chipsets: Intel 810, nVIDIA RIVA 128, ATI Rage and ATi rage Pro.

The problem can be fixed by editing the "user.cfg" file found in the *Thief (2)* install directory on your hard disk. A pure ASCII file, Notepad can be used without causing any problems and once the file is open, find the line that begins with ";Safe_texture_manager". Now that semi-colon ";" is causing the game engine to ignore the line so it needs to be removed. Position the cursor at the beginning of the line and remove the semi-colon using the delete key, save the file and exit. The game will now use additional code to manage textures safely and will stop the annoying crash. Note: this command will cause a slight reduction in frame rate so it shouldn't be used unless necessary.

2 Problem The game runs at double the speed on fast P4 (3.0GHz+) and AMD Athlon (3000+) systems. it.

Solution This occurs because the game doesn't feature any form of code that synchronises the engine with the video card and technology has moved on considerably since the engine was started eight years ago. This can be easily fixed by turning on vsync so that the video card slows itself down to the Hz rate of your monitor, 60Hz effective for DV-I and up to 160Hz for a CRT device. If you plan to use vsync as a solution on a CRT monitor, you may also need to reduce the refresh rate to 75.

The more visually impressive option though is to make your video card work harder to achieve the right frame rate. This can be achieved by cranking up anti-aliasing, anisotropic filtering Texture preference and Mipmap detail level. Trial and error will need to be used here in order to find the sweet spot between visual quality and performance but once you do, make sure you save the setting as a profile from your video cards control panel.

More Help
For more information about fixes and tweaks to the Thief engine head over to the through The Looking Glass forums: **www.ttlg.com/forums/showthread.php?s=&threadid=75031#texturememory**. Here you can find links to permanent fixes for Thief 1 Gold and a virtually permanent fix for Thief 2.

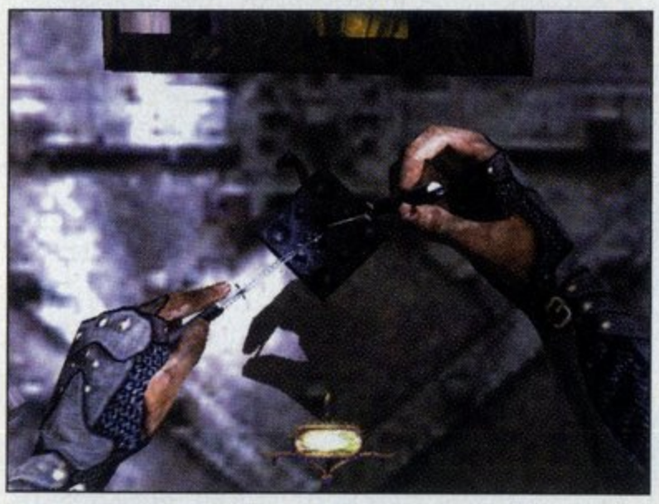
DO IT... *THIS MONTH!*

FINE-TUNING

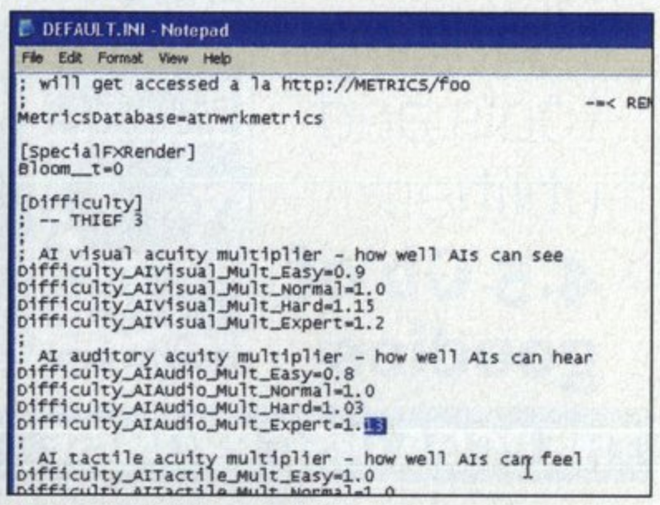
Tweak Thief

PROBLEM The interface is tailored for newcomers and the Xbox
REMEDY Make a few key adjustments to the configuration files
RESULT Traditional *Thief*-style action tailored to your personal taste

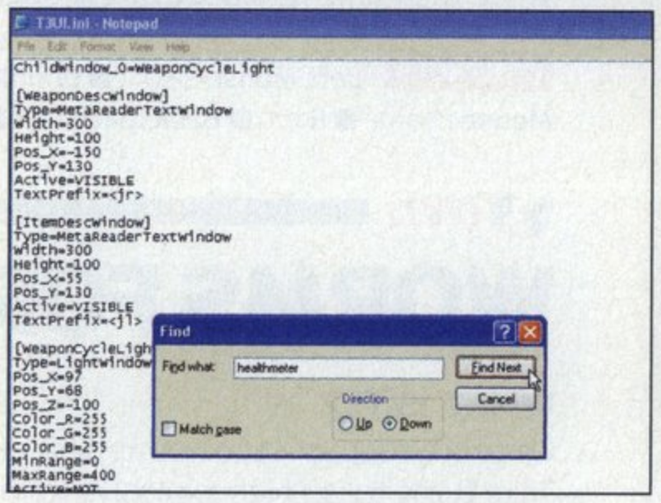
God bless Ion Storm; their Stevie Wonder approach to quality control and compensatory willingness to use easily-tweaked INI files should keep me in clover for years to come. The main 'feature' in the otherwise outstanding *Thief: Deadly Shadows* is already fixed with a patch you'll find on the disc, (the difficulty resets every time you save – nice one,) but you can also tweak the way the rest of the game plays to your liking. All that's needed is some judicious tinkering with the INI files you'll find in your *Thief* System folder. Do make sure you back them all up first. The little guide below will take you through a few basic tweaks, but if you want to take things further then there's a frankly terrifying number of further hacks, editing tools and even home-made patches over at **www.ttlg.com**, where fans are toiling day and night to transform the game into something that better fits the classic *Thief* pattern. Go forth and steal stuff.



1 Pick locks purely by sound: change the Scale_X, Y and Z entries between [Lock PickHUDWindow] and [LockPickHUDStageWindow6] to 0 in t3ui.ini.



2 Boost guard acuity by upping the numbers on the Expert setting for visual and audio to 1.5 in Default.ini. You'll need to restart your mission.

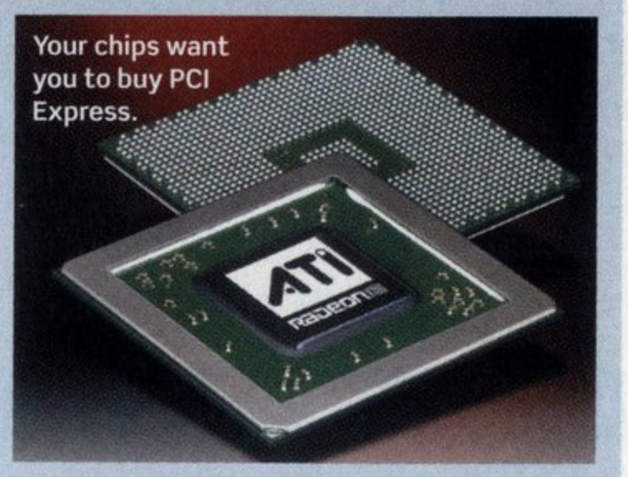


3 Disable the health meter by finding [Health meter] and changing Active from ACTIVE to NOT. To just see the bars when you drink a potion, change [HealthMeterPoint] to Active=NOT.

4 Change the savegame folder by running Regedit, going to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE \SOFTWARE\Ion Storm\Thief - Deadly Shadows, and changing the value of the SaveGamePath key.

TOO EMBARRASSED TO ASK...

"WHAT IS.... PCI EXPRESS?"



Your chips want you to buy PCI Express.

It's the future, that's what it is. Currently your PC's 'expansion' cards, such as whatever sound card you use, are plugged into standard, white, and very slow PCI slots, with the slightly-faster-but-still-rubbish AGP aperture reserved for your graphics card.

PCI Express is a new standard, currently being hyped to a dangerous degree by Intel, ATi and nVidia, which offers a monstrous speed increase and more power for the latest gas-guzzling graphics cards. The good news is that this will enable yet-more powerful graphics cards and some rather more interesting things that can be done with them – more interactive graphics effects, like genuinely realistic water, for example. The bad news is that it renders all existing cards obsolete – so if you're dead set on buying a new PC, then try holding off for a few months until PCI Express is established as a standard bit of kit.

ON THE DISCS

Featuring

- **10** top game demos
- **19** brilliant mods
- **20** great movies
- **32** life-changing tools and utilities
- **4.5 Gb of goodies!**

THE PCGA DISC PROMISE

- We pack every disc with the best new PC entertainment every month. If you can't find an item you were expecting, it probably just missed our deadline and you can bet we'll have it on next issue's disc.
- **PCs are inherently unreliable. Sad but true. So if something on your disc doesn't work then we'll help sort it out. See our Troubleshooter guide over the page to see what help we can offer.**
- We scour the earth to bring you the finest playable demos, movies, mods and utilities that PC gaming can provide. But if we miss a trick then tell our Disc Editor all about it. Email **dan@derwenthoward.com.au**

DVD vs CD

1 DVD **6.12 CDS!**

The world is moving on and CDs can't keep up. Demos, movies and mods are bigger than ever and, inevitably, we can't fit everything on the ancient storage medium.

This issue's DVD beats the CDs by:

- **+6** playable demos
- **+10** movies
- **+5** mods
- **+8** software tools
- **+29 items in total**

UPGRADE OPTIONS

- Get a subscription. This reduces the cost of the DVD edition by several clams per issue.
- **Get a DVD drive. There's one for only $23 in our Big Gear Hunt buyer's guide.**
- Miss out.

CD & DVD

ROME: TOTAL WAR

WHAT IS IT?

The most eagerly anticipated strategy game the PC has ever known. In this demo, assume the mantle of Hannibal and lead the Carthaginian army against the might of Rome.

Rome is bringing out the armchair general in us all.

DEMO GOALS

In 218BC Hannibal faced the vastly superior Roman army across the Trebia river. He hatched a plan to draw the Romans across the river before bringing his concealed cavalry to bear, flanking them on either side. Your goal is simple: put that plan into action.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- You'll need to rout, or kill every enemy unit on the battlefield. But don't give chase to every fleeing archer or spearmen, your army is more effective as a cohesive whole.
- Take time to play through the tutorial. *Rome* plays very differently to other RTS games, so it makes sense to be prepared
- At the battle of Trebia, your troops include cavalry, javelin throwing skirmishers, heavy infantry, masses of cavalry and... elephants. While the game is paused at the beginning, spin around the battlefield and commit their positions to memory.
- Elephants are best used to break through enemy lines but they're hugely vulnerable to arrow fire – if they come under attack, they'll flee, rampaging through your own lines. So be careful when and where you deploy them.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Rout the enemy without any of your soldiers fleeing.

README

Developer Creative Assembly
Publisher Activision **Requires** 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card

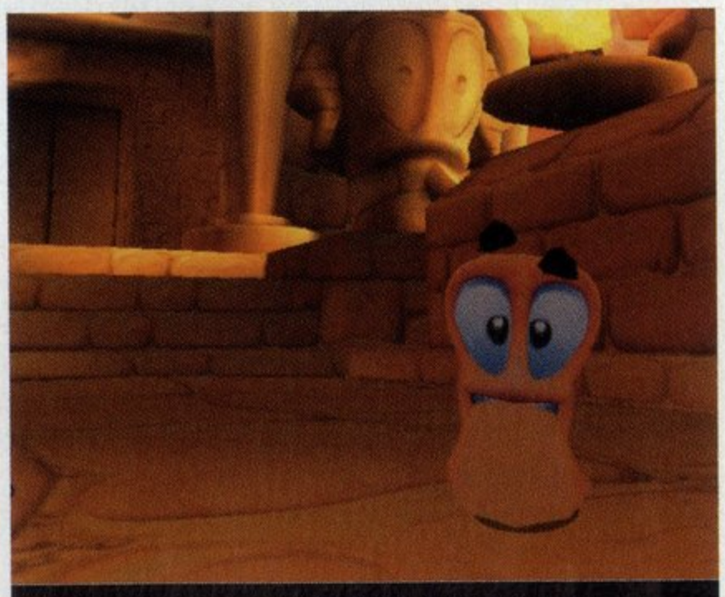
CONTROLS **Left Mouse** select ■ **Double Left Mouse** move to unit ■ **Right Mouse** engage ■ **Double Right Mouse** charge ■ **R** run ■ **Backspace** halt ■ **Y** fire ■ **Delete** track troops ■ **Ctrl+I** all infantry ■ **Ctrl+C** all cavalry

DVD

WORMS FORTS: UNDER SIEGE

WHAT IS IT?

Control a team of four worms bent on war. Take turns to lob high explosive from the relative safety of your own base, atop its lofty towers.



He's happy now, but wait until the bomb drops.

DEMO GOALS

Two teams of invertebrates are building opposing castles. Each lines their defences with all manner of obnoxious medieval weaponry and explosive fauna. Last hermaphrodite standing carries the day.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- Rather than simply lobbing grenades at each other from across the map, *Forts* is all about protecting your assets. Construction, rather than wanton destruction. When you enter a level for the first time, clicking the right mouse button will bring up your ordnance menu.
- You'll see a new addition to the familiar *Worms* arsenal: towers. Click on them to drop them into position. Now, using Space to jump, leap onto the top, and press the right mouse button again. You can now choose to reinforce the tower with fixed gun positions. We recommend the trebuchet, primed to launch an overweight explosive moose.
- The type of fort you can build depends on the number of stars you hold: they're collected when you drop your fortifications over them.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Defeat the blue team without losing a single worm.

README

Developer Team 17
Publisher Sega **Requires** PIII 800, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **Right Mouse Button** choose weapon ■ **Left Mouse Button** fire (Hold Down) ■ **Q** first person view ■ **Space** jump (double tap for double jump)

DVD

LIVE FOR SPEED

WHAT IS IT?

The most realistic car-racing game you're ever likely to play. You've got one track, and over 15 cars on a single course to beat. There's also a gorgeous internet mode, where you can take on the wired world.

DEMO GOALS

Relearn everything you ever knew about driving games. Forget winning the race, the challenge here is to stay on the track at high speed.

Clearly, that's not a legal licence plate.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› There are a huge number of visual options to fiddle with before you even think about heading out onto the track. This is important. If your framerate drops when 30 odd cars are jostling for position, you'll lose all focus.

› Think of your vehicle as a nervous wreck. If you surprise it with any sudden movements then it's going to spin out of control, off the track and into the sandbanks. So always plan ahead.

› There are three vehicles to choose from. The first is a mediocre front-wheel drive hatchback and a rear wheel drive monster that comes in two flavours, standard and turbo. We recommend taking the hatchback out for a spin to begin with – these cars are finicky beasts.

› Anyone without a steering wheel and pedals should take time to learn the mouse controls. *Live for Speed* demands some kind of analogue controller.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Beat the maximum number of AI drivers on 'Normal'.

README

Developer Live For Speed
Publisher Liveforspeed.net **Requires** P4 1Ghz, 256 MbRAM, 64Mb 3D card.

CONTROLS **Left Mouse Button** accelerate ■ **Right Mouse Button** brake ■ **D** shift up ■ **S** shift down ■ **C** clutch ■ **Q** handbrake ■ **T** talk ■ **V** view ■ **B** horn ■ **G** flash lights

CD & DVD

MEQON PHYSICS

WHAT IS IT?

A brilliant selection of small technology demonstrations, showing how physics could be integrated into next-gen PC games.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Magic. Special programmer pixie juice we suppose. Whatever. We don't really care. All we know is that we want games to be this reactive, right now.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Knock down the scaffolding only using level 2 balls.

WHERE DO I START?

Unzip the archives onto your desktop. Then, double click meqdemos.exe. You'll be presented with a 12 set menu – choose your Newtonian poison from here.

THERE'S SO MANY!

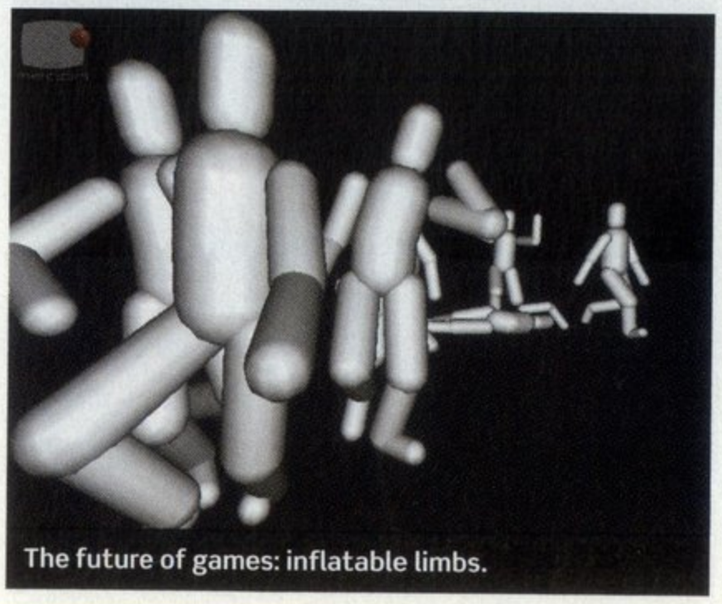
Our favourites include the Jeep, where you can knock over simple boxes, and drive through a simple loop, and the castle simulation, complete with an enormous wall, made up of individual bricks. You'll notice that pulling out one doesn't disrupt the entire structure – but picking up one and lobbing it, with all the force your mouse-hand can muster, sends bricks flying all over the place. We're already giddy with excitement over the possibilities of this: imagine castle sieges where catapults and trebuchets demolished the outer walls a block at a time, stone tablets crushing the wretched defenders

SICKO

It'd be great. You can even see how technology could improve the character movements – there's a series of procedural animation routines that recover after interruption: they'll stumble but carry on walking when you throw blocks at their feet.

README

Developer Meqon
Publisher N/A **Requires** Crystal ball, mad physicist hair


The future of games: inflatable limbs.

DISC EXTRAS

More than just demos...

+19 mods

Four brilliant *UT* mods including *RPG*, *Healthbot*, and *Samurai Tournament* - plus mods for *Civ III*, *NWN* and *C&C: Generals*.

TEST OF THE KAI: No, it's not a restaurant critic

+20 movies

Sequel-mania! Spectacular new footage of *Battlefield 2*, *The Sims 2* and *Half-Life 2*. Plus more of the best upcoming titles of 2004/5.

BATTLEFIELD 2: see the shiny sequel in action

+11 game extras

Transform *Doom* into a modern FPS, make Garrett look even better, mod *UT2004* to death and get all the latest patches.

DOOM SHAREWARE: get obsessed again, in 3D

+Patches

› Sterling new title look like your dad's Datsun that's in need of a service? We've got fixes for:
Battlefield Vietnam
Far Cry
IL-2 Sturmovik
Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow
Unreal Tournament 2004

+Galleries

› Screenshots from some of the best upcoming PC games:
Dawn of War, KOTOR2, Tabula Rasa, Nexus: The Jupiter Incident & more!

See the back of your box for full disc contents.

Disc page contents refer to DVD edition. CD contents restricted by size.

THE TOOLKIT

Essential tools and apps

Game apps

Match-making .....X-Fire
Server browser .....All-Seeing Eye
Voice communicator .....Skype
Chat software .....Trillian
Screen grabber .....IrfanView
Emulation .....Dosbox, ScummVM
Demo viewer .....Seismovision
Video capture .....FRAPS

Performance

Download manager .....BitTorrent
Uninstaller.....EasyUninstall 6
Video card driver.....Radeon, nVidia
System Monitor ..Motherboard Monitor

Security

Virus checker .....AVG
Anti-spam .....Spybot Search & Destroy
Anti-spyware .....AdAware
Anti-popup.....Coolweb Shredder
Firewall.....Zone Alarm

Media Management

File compressor .....WinRar
Picture viewer .....IrfanView
PDF viewer .....Acrobat Reader
Web browser.....Mozilla Firefox
FTP client .....Filezilla
Email client .....Mozilla Thunderbird
Music player .....WinAmp
Movie player .....Media Player Classic
Movie codec.....DivX

TROUBLE SHOOTER

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1 If the menu program does not start, the autorun feature may be disabled on your PC. Go to the START/RUN command on the task-bar and type D:\IERUNNER.EXE (where D is the drive letter).

2 For problems with an individual demo or application, refer to the Help section on the disc. Also ensure your drivers and DirectX version are up-to-date.

3 If your disc is defective then return it to the address below, along with a description of the fault and an SAE:
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4 As soon as we discover issues with programs on the disc, we will post solutions on the **PC Games Addict** website. Check here to see if there's a quick fix:
http://www.pcga.com.au/

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DVD

BLITZKRIEG 2.0

WHAT IS IT?

A magnificent WWII mod for C&C: Generals. Replacing the three factions from Generals are the Allies (Yanks), Gemans and the Russians (as if they weren't part of the Allied forces?).

It's not overly realistic, but it's an enjoyable, with a single player campaign part way there. We thought we'd give the RTS gamers some mods to tinker with too this month, and with talks of follow-ups to Blitzkrieg 2.0 with naval support and possibly the Japanese as another faction to play as.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

›Cash for kills, that's the way it works in *Blitzkrieg 2.0*. Somewhat like say *Ground Control 2*, you don't get cash unless you're doing something, so sitting back at base won't get you anywhere.

›Cash is also received for taking buildings dotted around the map, further incentive to have your forces venture out. However, don't make the mistake of overextending yourself or spreading yourself too thin trying to be everywhere at once.

›That said, we found the tank rush wasn't the best option in this mod. While always handy to have armour, urban combat tends to be an infantry battle.

›Don't be afraid to call in for air support. Better to buzz and have them help than die and realise they could have made the difference. Use what's available.

›Keep in mind what the strengths of the different factions were in WWII. Russian's had the crack snipers, Germans the biggest tanks and so on.

README

Developer Derelict Studios
Publisher N/A
Requires C&C: Generals

CONTROLS **Blitzkrieg 2.0 uses the standard C&C: Generals controls as a base. Unless you want to customise it, you should be right to start playing.**

CD & DVD

ARENA WARS

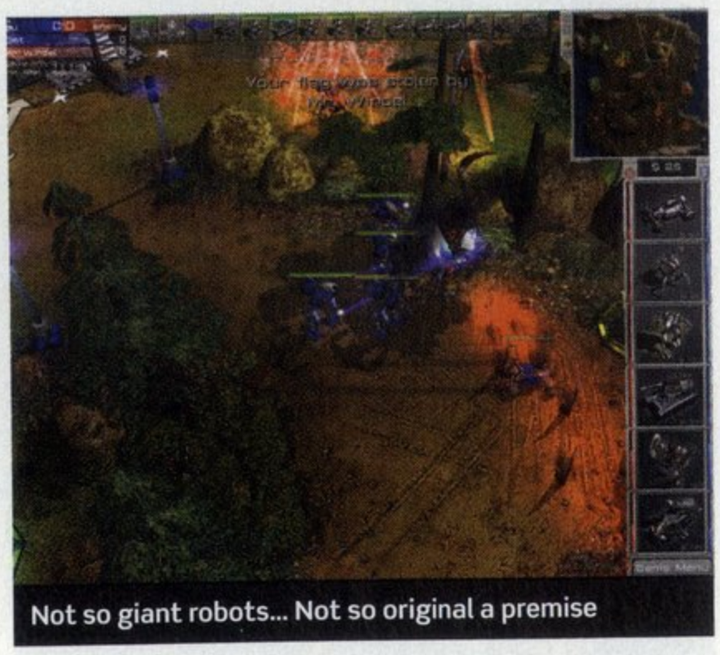
WHAT IS IT?

Talk about self-explanatory, Arena Wars is a futuristic form of robotic combat, set on small island-like arenas. If you're yet to understand why Eliot was making UT2004 references, a blast with this demo will reveal all.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Not hard enough? Start a custom battle and crank it up.

DEMO GOALS

Don't let the UT stylings or modes distract you from the fact this plays like any RTS. Take on the two basic tournament CTF matches and the custom-battle on and on...



Not so giant robots... Not so original a premise

PERFORMANCE TIPS

›Buggies may be weak, but if you have a couple off to the side and manage to engage most of the enemy forces, they can make easy flag captures.

›Explore the special functions of each unit type. Your tanks for example can teleport, which can help them assault those stronger units without lagging behind out of firing range.

›When a stronger unit goes for your flag, make sure you attack it early and move some units to assault it along its trip home. Chasing and firing the whole way is not effective.

›Keep pushing out units. It's better to have defenses ready to engage the enemy or pepper them as they run off with your flag than to have your first line of defense arrive when its too late.

›Need an edge? Don't forget to collect the respawning power ups scattered around the maps. Often a one-shot ability is all that will determine the outcome of a battle.

README

Developer eXdream
Publisher Acaron
Requires PIII 700MHz, 256Mb RAM, 32MB 3D Card

CONTROLS **Spaec** Last event ■ **S** Stop ■ **A** Attack move ■ **Ctrl** Force Attack

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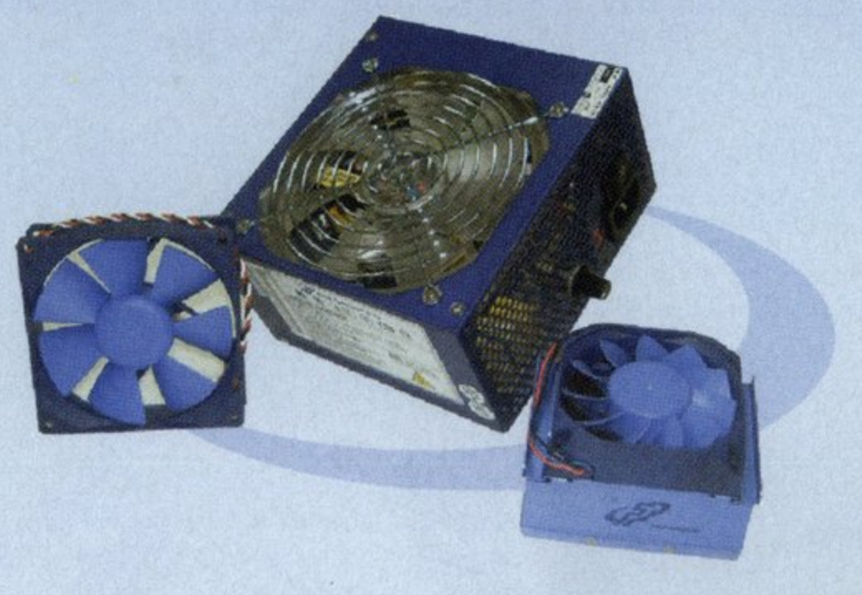

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Evil Genius
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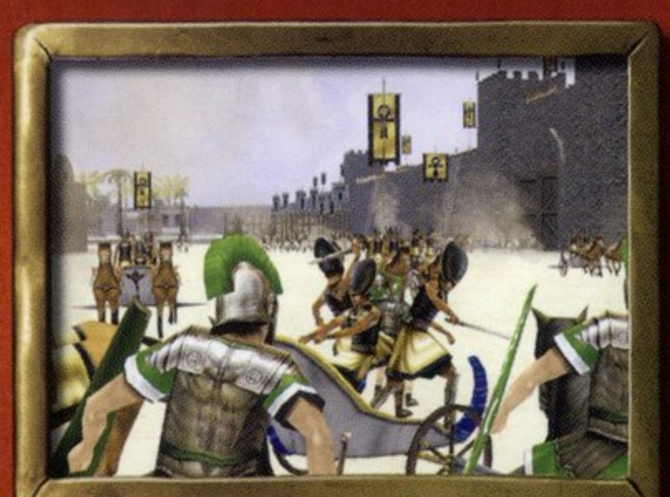

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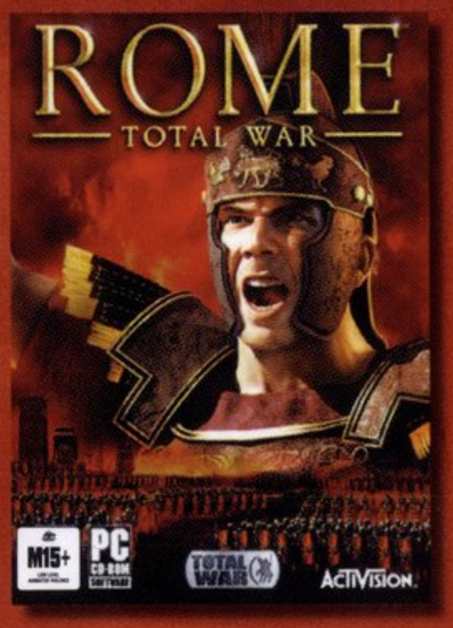

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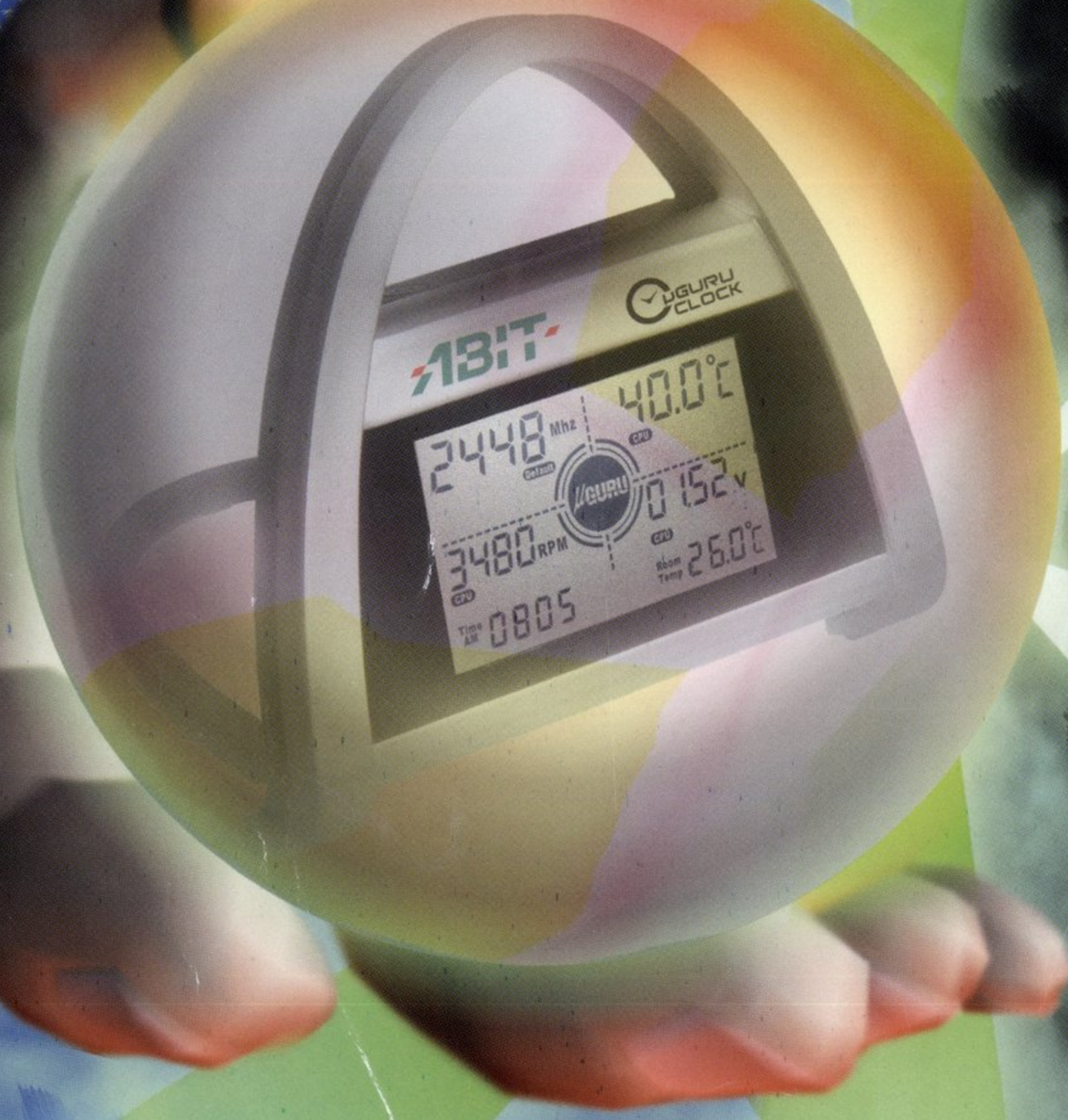

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